

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

*"I am composing this treatise on Self-Knowledge
for those who are purified and peaceful,
calm of mind, free of craving,
and desirous of Liberation."*

(1)

THE JOY IS NOT IN THE OBJECT

The business of life is the business of happiness. Because we feel limited with respect to happiness, everyone every minute is fully engaged trying to attain greater happiness. When I take a job, fall in love, read a book, eat a meal, go to the dentist, pray or meditate, I expect the activity and/or its results to make me feel better than I do at the moment. No matter how good I feel I can always imagine a state of greater happiness. If I'm feeling miserable, my actions will be calculated to remove or lessen the misery, a situation I view as an increase in happiness. When a better state is inconceivable, I refrain from activities that might compromise it. An investigation of the world's tropical beaches reveals countless people, flat on their backs, content as clams, not moving a muscle.

Everything we do is for the sake of happiness. Some accumulate money, not necessarily for itself, but for the happiness it supposedly brings. Others seek happiness in life-threatening sports which produce a "high," an aliveness beyond the "normal" state. We ingest chemicals, pills, drink, and drugs to change our state of mind for the better. Belief in God is never intended to make one miserable. Nobody gets married to suffer.

At first glance activities seem to produce happiness. I jog, garden, meditate, or ski and feel happy. But if happiness were in an activity the activity should produce happiness for anyone performing it. Giving away millions makes philanthropists happy. Letting go of a dime is anathema to a miser. A granny who knits for fun will not take pleasure in bungee jumping.

Can happiness be achieved getting and possessing certain objects? A man divorces his wife because she seems the cause of his misery but before

the ink is dry on the divorce decree she finds herself in the arms of another - who sees her as his darling bundle of joy. A steak makes a carnivore happy, a vegetarian unhappy. In spite of this fact we work overtime to get happiness through objects and activities.

Some try to attain happiness through the mind. Poets, writers, artists, and intellectuals find happiness playing with thoughts and ideas, feelings and emotions. Professionals subject their minds to years of discipline with the conviction that intense and sustained happiness can be found in knowledge.

An tiny minority, "spiritual" questers, try to find happiness by disciplining themselves in prayer, meditation, chanting, breathing, or "processing" to achieve altered or "high" states of consciousness.

The psychological world believes happiness can be attained by removing psychological barriers: disturbing experiences and memories, self-limiting concepts, and unforgiving thoughts lodged in the subconscious mind.

LIMITATION OF OBJECT HAPPINESS

Both approaches, the physical and the psychological, share the belief that through self-effort certain objective and/or subjective factors inhibiting happiness can be changed, resulting in greater happiness. Conventional wisdom supports this view and, to be fair, the kernel of truth it contains probably accounts for the universal attempt to get happiness by changing objective and subjective factors.

Why do we feel happy when we achieve a goal or obtain a desired object? According to spiritual science all human activities are motivated by a separation from our natural state of happiness, a separation that gives rise to two apparently contradictory instincts, Fear and Desire, both of which extrovert and disturb the mind, producing many positive and negative emotions. Beneath every desire a fear lurks, behind every fear a desire. If I don't get what I want I'll be unhappy. Avoiding what I don't want makes me happy. So the fear of unhappiness is just the desire for happiness. These two forces, attraction and repulsion, attachment and aversion, likes and dislikes affect every aspect of our lives.

The myriad fears and desires playing in the mind, both subtle and gross, stem from a deeper need - **the need to be free of fear and desire** - the need to be fulfilled or happy. When I say I want a new car or a new lover I don't actually want the object. I want the happiness apparently tied up with it.

REMOVING THE WALL

If happiness or unhappiness doesn't come from objects, it has to be coming from me.

If true, why does it seem to come from objects?

Because the attainment of desired objects or the avoidance of feared objects temporarily removes the wall of fear and desire separating us from the Self, the source of happiness. When the dam bursts our lives are flooded with happiness, from the ecstasy of love to the satisfaction in a cup of coffee.

At the time of the removal of a fear or desire the mind associates the happiness with the object, rather than with the removal of the subjective limitation. That human beings are universally attached to and frightened of objects, physical, emotional, and intellectual confirms this poorly-appreciated truth.

Almost everyone at one time or another believes happiness comes from giving and/or receiving love. As long as the love object gives and/or receives according to the subject's special needs, everything is fine, but as soon as the object stops cooperating the love dries up, at which point the removal of the object is thought to make us happy. Why does the love dry up? Because the idea that it was coming from the object acted like a switch in the mind which erected a wall between the mind and the Self, effectively cutting off contact with one's own unlimited reservoir of love.

That switch, the belief that the joy is in the object, can as well pull down the wall. For example, loneliness often causes us fantasize about an ideal someone who we wish would come into our lives and remove our unhappiness. When reality presents an approximation of our fantasy, the dam holding our own limitless inner ocean of love breaks and love wildly cascades into the mind, giving the experience of happiness. Because the process is unconscious and takes place instantaneously the love seems to be coming from the object, or an interaction with the object - but the object is only a catalyst, a trigger, that activates the inner switch.

Let's argue that since everyone's innermost nature is happiness/love the joy **is** in the object, in this case people. It is, but since people invariably impose conditions on their love we can't count on another's love to make us happy. To avoid this trap I should understand that though love is one, I can only count on it when I've realized it's my nature. To do that **I must sacrifice the fears and desires separating me from my own happiness/love.** For example, people feel happy in deep sleep because

objective and subjective limitations, mental and emotional activity, are absent.

OBJECT¹ HAPPINESS NOT PERMANENT

If you can't accept that happiness and unhappiness aren't inherent in objects, I think you'll agree that object-related happiness is impermanent. If permanent happiness were attainable from objects the desire to have the same or another object would never arise. Conversely, were permanent happiness attainable by the removal of an object (remember, this includes states of mind, bad feelings about oneself or the world, for example) we would never have to remove that object again. But experience shows that **desire for and fear of objects continue, often increase, with their possession, enjoyment and renunciation.** I may want more of what I want, less of it, or something else altogether. One day I may even crave something that previously made me miserable. The satisfaction of my desires and the removal of my fears does not leave me permanently happy. For example, people who have associated happiness with a certain object, say a drug or alcohol-induced state of mind, try to achieve that state over and over, until it no longer yields pleasure. Nobody was ever permanently satisfied by a successful sexual encounter - or any other apparently happiness-producing object. In fact happiness-bringing objects often suddenly become unhappiness bringing objects.

The confusion about the nature of happiness and unhappiness with reference to objects suggests that the question of **happiness and unhappiness must be centered on me, the subject.**

Am I whole and complete and therefore immune to the pull of objects, or am I an incomplete being, one desperately in need of things to complete me? Having eliminated objects as the source, a confusion still exists about my nature, prompting further analysis. When I think about it I can see that sometimes I'm happy and sometimes unhappy. After careful consideration I can confidently conclude that happiness is natural to me because when I

¹ What is an object? In common parlance the term usually indicates a physical object. For the purpose of Self Realization Vedanta divides everything into two apparently separate categories: subject and object. Although there appear to be many subjects, there is actually only one, the Self, and many objects, the Seer and the seen. An object, therefore, is anything perceived or seen, including the instruments of perception, the body, mind, and intellect. So objects include physical forms, *sensations*, feelings, thoughts, ideas, memories, dreams, and states of mind. Objects, by definition, are not conscious. The Self, by definition, is. One category of objects, people, i.e. egos needs further clarification. Although people, which are composed of three instruments of experience (body, mind, and intellect) are subjective with reference to the objects they experience, they are objects of experience for the Self. Vedanta claims that the appearance of many individuals is caused by an unconscious association of the one Self with many bodies.

experience it I always cling to it. And when I'm unhappy the reverse is true: I try feverishly to rid myself of it.

Therefore, if I'm happy by nature, don't consistently experience happiness, and know it doesn't come from objects and activities, how would I attain it?

Vedantic texts like *Atma Bodh* are addressed to those who are convinced that objects and activities will not bring lasting happiness. This conviction leads to a state of mind, referred to above as “peaceful and free of craving,” (for objects) from which an inquiry into the nature of the Self can be conducted. Without an inquiry the riddle of one's true identity will not be solved.

Another of Shankara's texts, *Vivekachoodamani*, The Crest Jewell of Discrimination, provides a detailed list describing the qualities and qualifications that ensure success in Self Realization, the first of which, discrimination,² is defined as “a firm conviction that the Self alone is real and that the phenomenal world is unreal.”³ For “phenomenal world” read “objects.” Objects are pursued precisely because they're thought to be real. The self-confidence and self-esteem arising from the ability to separate the joy from the object is the cornerstone of a qualified seeker's psychology.

Discrimination leads to dispassion,⁴ “the desire to give up momentary enjoyments” a quality expressing as a healthy feeling of indifference to the triviality and impermanence of existence. Not a cold uncaring state as one might suppose, it is a feeling of spaciousness that insulates the mind from the little pinpricks of life and enables one to confront tragedies with equanimity.⁵ Because curiosity is its hallmark, the dispassionate mind encourages the seeker to ask pertinent existential questions and set out patiently in search of answers. Dispassion inclines the mind toward an ironical, objective and humorous view of oneself and others.

Combined with discrimination, dispassion makes it possible for the seeker to cultivate the powers that ensure a quiet mind, one in which the knowledge “I am whole and complete actionless Awareness” can stick. These powers are described as: (1) *shama*, “the peaceful state achieved when the mind has detached from the sense objects after a careful consideration of their defects; (2) *dama*, “returning the active and perceptive organs to their

² *Viveka*

³ The quotations are taken from the verses in *Vivekchoodami* discussing the qualifications.

⁴ *Viragya*

⁵ *Viragya* is sometimes used interchangeably with *titiksha* which is defined as “the capacity to endure all sorrows and suffering without struggling for redress or revenge, being always free of anxiety or lament over them.”

respective (subtle-body) centers; (3) *Uparati*, “a condition in which the mind is free of the thought of external objects; and (4) *samadhana* (tranquillity), a state, not gained through thinking, when the mind is constantly engaged in absorbed contemplation of the Self.”⁶

But a discriminating, dispassionate, quiet mind is not enough. Shankar says, “That by which one understands the inner meaning of scripture as well as the words of the preceptor is called faith⁷ by the wise. By this alone does reality become clear.”

Nor is a discriminating, dispassionate, quiet, believing mind enough. To successfully tread the path of Self knowledge two additional qualifications are noted. The first, the impatient and burning desire to release oneself from ignorance by realizing the Self,⁸ provides the motivation to carry the seeker through the many difficulties encountered on the path. And secondly, Shankara says “Among the instruments and conditions necessary for liberation, devotion is supreme. A constant attempt to inquire into the Self and live up to one’s own real nature is called *bhakti*, single-pointed devotion.”

When these and other qualities like patience and determination are in full flower one is said to be capable of scaling the sacred heights of Self-Realization.

***"Just as chopping wood is the indirect cause
and fire the direct cause of cooking,
spiritual practice is the indirect cause
and Self-knowledge the direct cause of liberation."***

(2)

Having concluded that happiness is not in objects, that it’s the nature of the Self, I’m free to do nothing. After all, I’m it. What can I do to get me? I am me.

Unfortunately I cannot just accept myself as a complete being. The message has yet to sink into the subconscious - which is conditioned to action. It wants me to believe that I need to “get” enlightened. And so I accept the challenge and resolve to work on my self. I take up religion,

⁶ I’ve included the technical terms which refer to subtle aspects of the meditative art to bolster the contention that Vedanta is in fact a “science” of the subjective Self and not a philosophy or belief system. Use of the Sanskrit terms is appropriate since no words describing these subjective realities exist in English.

⁷ *Shraddha*

⁸ *Mumukshutva*

therapy or spiritual practice, whatever that means to me. I change my diet, read scripture, go to church, finance the New Age, pray and meditate.

But the resolution to change doesn't destroy the compulsion to act egoically. I may not be chasing the objects any more but they continue to chase me. People with addictions struggle to break them, often resolving to quit once and for all, but within minutes of the vow, the floodgates open sweeping away big rocklike resolutions as if they were tiny grains of sand.

Nor does the resolution to change free one of ego. In fact, not only does the ego make the resolution, but in so far as it takes up spiritual practice without changing its attitude toward the way it lives, it only saddles itself with new expectations that reinforce its sense of limitation.

And finally since the actor, the ego, is limited, the results are also limited. An endless number of limited results does not add up to an unlimited result - uncaused joy or limitless freedom i.e. the Self.

Spiritual practice is superior to unexamined worldly activity in delivering limited happiness, however, because it slowly breaks down the wall of fear and desire separating us from the Self.⁹ Done in the right spirit,¹⁰ it cleans the Unconscious and neutralizes the negative states of mind that make life unbearable and the Self unrecognizable.

Actions don't do themselves. In fact, action is done egolessly by the Self, but the ego thinks it's the author. Allowing the ego to believe spiritual practice is the direct cause of liberation is inviting the fox to tend the chicken coop. The purpose of practice is to empty the Unconscious and create a clear conscious mind so Self knowledge can destroy the ego's limiting "I am a doer/enjoyer" idea.

The spiritual practice business may seem a cruel catch 22. If action won't free me then I'll drop out and wait for "Grace" or the miraculous touch of a guru. But I can't get free unless my mind is purified and peaceful. And the only way to achieve a quiet mind is to roll up my sleeves and get to work.

In fact it's not a catch 22. Spiritual practice simply creates the conditions that contribute to the feast, but doesn't "cook the food." The knowledge arising from direct experience of oneself as a non-dual limitless being is the fire necessary for a proper meal, meaning a blissful life free of pain and ignorance. Hard work, spiritual or otherwise, by well-intentioned egos will not produce Realization. Why? Because...

⁹ Work whose motives are unexamined reinforces the subconscious impressions that produce mental and emotional activity.

¹⁰ see pages 62-65

*"Action cannot remove ignorance
for they are not opposed.
Self-Knowledge removes it
as light removes darkness."
(3)*

Ignorance means (1) not knowing that I am a complete, limitless, blissful being and (2) thinking of oneself as incomplete, limited, and inadequate. Ignorance causes me to chase objects or perform actions I believe will complete me. Even spiritual activities won't complete me because they are also motivated by ignorance.

No matter what I do, I can't get something I already have. One day a man asked God for a head on his shoulders. God thought about it and said, "In spite of the fact that I'm omnipotent I'm afraid you'll have to ask for something else. I can give you another fatter head, an additional brainless head on top of the present one, or ten tiny pointed heads facing in different directions. But I'm afraid I can't give what you already have."

Doing or non-doing won't wipe out ignorance because the Self is not an attainable object. Action, no matter how enthusiastic and well-intentioned, will not produce something one already has. Nothing can be done because the "object" is you. Only knowledge will reveal it.

SELF NOT KNOWN THROUGH (MOST) MEDIA

Though the Self cannot be accurately described, It can be known because It is us. Always present and accounted for, the Self is the most intimate and essential component of every experience. However, we don't know It the way we know an idea, emotion, or sense object, aspects of outer reality known through media. Sounds, for example, require ears. Information, stimuli, pass through the ears, enter the hearing center in the mind, and are interpreted by the mind according to past experience. Whatever knowledge we have is dependent on the means through which it comes.

But the Self cannot be objectified so it cannot be known through media. Anyone can read scripture and claim Self knowledge but their knowledge of the Self would be inferential, conditioned by how the intellect

interpreted certain words. If the knowledge of the Self isn't mediate, intellectual knowledge what kind is it?

EXPERIENCE VERSUS KNOWLEDGE

Some claim enlightenment can't be experienced, others that it can. If enlightenment is described as an experience, a transaction between subject and object, it is a peculiar kind of experience. Ordinary experience is a straightforward interaction between a human being and the world. If the mind, consciousness with a small "c," the subject, is a gross and limited transformation of Pure Consciousness, how will it fully know or experience Pure Consciousness, the Self in its unlimited form?¹¹ Just as the senses can't experience the mind, nor the material world the senses, so the mind/ego entity can't "experience" the Self.

According to spiritual science everything is Consciousness, even the material world, an effect of which Consciousness is the cause. But as Consciousness involves itself with itself as matter, its "light" apparently gets absorbed into the object and, on the physical level at least, stops shining. For example, even though light reflecting off my body falls equally on a mirror and the black wall on which it hangs, I will only see myself in the mirror. It also gets absorbed into a mind clouded with emotion and thought, making it unexperiencable for all intents and purposes. It can, however, be "experienced" in a pure mind.

The non-experience school claims the Self is the "light" illumining all experiences. Humans, they say, are two-tiered: existing on one level as a subject interacting with objects, which necessarily means experience, and on another as Consciousness, the "Light" that illumines the subject's experiences. So in scriptural literature you will find definitions of the Self as transcendent, beyond, uninvolved, and unattached to anything, living in its own hermetically sealed world, the shining world of knowledge, unaware of anything other than itself or, as the witness to outer events.

Many in the spiritual world, unaware of this fact, incorrectly believe the ego will experience enlightenment like it experiences everything else. So to save them the grief of trying to "get" a mind-blowing cosmic enlightenment experience, the knowledge people point out that enlightenment is not that type of experience. Mind-blowing blissful cosmic experiences, which come by the grace of God, not individual effort, are simply mind-

¹¹ Consciousness capitalized refers to the Self. Without capitals it refers to the mind.

blowing blissful cosmic experiences, reportable only because they are observed by the Self which as disinterestedly watches non mind-blowing unhappy mundane experiences.

That experience doesn't always lead to true knowledge is another dimension in the "experience vs. knowledge" debate. For example, from the point of view of a person standing on the equator the sun seems to rise in the east and set in the west, but at certain times of the year the same person can stand on the North Pole and experience the sun going around in a circle. Which is true? Knowledge has it that though apparently rising and setting, with reference to the earth the sun is stationary and the earth turns. Similarly, if the Self is experienced in one way at one time, as a blazing light without circumference, for example, at another as a cosmic vibration, which is true? Neither. Knowledge has it that the Self is the Awareness that illumines both experiences.¹²

Another example of the contradictory nature of experience, psychic fact, is that sometimes we experience ourselves as miserable suffering creatures and sometimes as radiantly happy beings. Which is true? Again, knowledge has it that we are miserable suffering creatures when identified with ego and happy adequate beings when identified with the Self. Still, experience can't be discounted because the experience of oneself as a complete happy being is true and corresponds to scripture,¹³ even though it's contradicted by another more common experience.

Finally, the non-experience of enlightenment has tremendous implications in terms of experience. If the knowledge/experience of the Self didn't change experience what would be the point of seeking it? The way the Self realized experience the world is radically different from those whose experience is projected by the *samskaras*.¹⁴ Or, more accurately, the Self realized enjoy a completely different relationship to *samskara*-projected experience¹⁵ than those who don't know themselves to be the Self. Precisely because a limited and painful experience of life becomes unlimited and joyful upon knowledge/experience of the Self do so many seek it.

¹² Consciousness and Awareness are synonyms. Awareness is perhaps a better term since we tend to associate the word "consciousness" with mental and emotional activity. Where "awareness" or "consciousness" are not capitalized they refer to the Subtle Body.

¹³ The Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, Bhagavad Gita and a plethora of Vedantic texts.

¹⁴ Sub and Unconscious impressions, the subtle footprints of past actions that unfold the individual's destiny and character.

¹⁵ The enlightened experience the world and their bodies and minds as do the unenlightened. However, enlightenment endows them with the power, called *viveka*, to separate the meaning the mind projects on gross and subtle experience from reality, the Self. Therefore something that seems real to the unenlightened may be known to be unreal by the enlightened.

The purpose of this discussion is not to weigh in on one side or the other of a weighty spiritual argument, but to show that when talking about the Self, we should have an acute appreciation of the limitation of concepts born solely of experience. And, secondly, because concepts are necessary, we should have concepts that are as close to the truth as possible. Otherwise, false concepts about the nature of the Self, its bodies, and states may deny our inquiry its fruit.

The spiritual world is chock full of indiscriminating seekers who have formed irrational concepts about the Self on the basis of personal experience, uninformed interpretation of scripture, and the words of enlightened or so-called enlightened beings. Without comprehensive and accurate knowledge, Self realization, except in occasional cases, is impossible. **In fact Self realization is rare precisely because the Self, which is the nature of everyone, is thought to be a unique experience.**

One day a man called his servant saying, "Here's a shovel and bucket. Go to the cellar and empty out all the darkness." The servant did as instructed returning several hours later to report that though he had removed hundreds of bucketsful the room was still dark. "So," said the master, "any ideas?"

"Well," replied the servant, "why don't I just turn on the light?"

*"The Self seems limited because of ignorance.
Destroy ignorance and the limitless Self is revealed,
like the sun when clouds pass away."*

(4)

The belief in my insignificance comes because I take the body-mind-sense complex to be me. I look around and see how small I am compared to the vast and complex world surrounding me. I see six billion other bodies and know I'm a dispensable nobody. My planet, like my solar system, is a fly speck, a meaningless living oddity in an apparently dead cosmos, my modest life span a trillionth of a nanosecond on the cosmic clock. Nothing remains the same; everything rushes headlong into the jaws of death. Without so much as a by your leave, a tiny virus can destroy my life. Is it any wonder I see myself as limited?

Yet some part refuses to accept limitation. As I travel along my path struggling to distinguish myself at peak moments the clouds part, the sun shines through, and my inner voice thunders, "You are adequate, limitless, and whole. You are pure love."

Something tells me this knowledge should last forever.

My friends and family don't understand, my explanations fall on deaf ears. Undeterred, I start to meditate. One day in the stillness all boundaries dissolve and I again know freedom. I see radiance behind the eyes of people on the street and hear the universal sound everywhere.

And when the experience fades, the memory, a sacred object in my mind, keeps me striving to become something I already know I am.

How absurd! When I see the wind blowing away the clouds obscuring the sun, I can't wait for an inner wind to blow away the misconceptions keeping me in ignorance. But is there such a wind? It seems conscious effort is required. This effort is constant practice of knowledge.

*Constant practice of knowledge
neutralizes ignorance
as a base neutralizes an acid,
purifying the individual self.
(5)*

The individual self is the body-mind-intellect-ego entity, the person we've been led to believe is "us." We're certain this entity is real but it is little more than a reflection caused when Consciousness¹⁶ shines on the bundle of experience-impressions¹⁷ making up our minds. If our experiences have been predominately positive the mind will be peaceful and we'll think of ourselves as happy people; if our experiences have been positive and negative in equal measure we're likely to have a confused view of ourselves. If we've experienced wounding, betrayal, and abandonment, the mind will be wounded, resentful, and despairing and we'll see ourselves as miserable beings. The 'stains of ignorance' are the mental and emotional residue that arise out of an identification with the mind, the past. To experience and consequently know our true, immediate, self-evident nature, the mirror of the mind should be clean and undistorted.

To purify the mind we need to become mindful of Self ignorance by watching our thoughts, monitoring our feelings, and observing our speech. After examining a particular misconception discard it as "not Self." The verse calls for "constant" practice of knowledge because Self ignorance continually manifests in our consciousness as the four following limiting

¹⁶ The Self. Vedanta distinguishes the Self, Consciousness without thought, from the mind, consciousness in motion.

¹⁷ This phenomenon will be explained in detail in the commentary on verse 12, page 21.

concepts, major limbs on the tree of non-apprehension from which myriad minor branches grow.

These self-limiting concepts, referred to as “not Self” are:

I AM THE BODY¹⁸

Our most pervasive and severely limiting concept is "I am the body," the source of much grief - the immense fear of disease, old age and death, for example. Why am I not the body?

First, because **it is perceivable**, an object of my awareness. I see or feel it, therefore it is other than me. The Self is the perceiver.

Second, because **it is insentient**. If I were the body the body would know me just as I know it, but the body has no idea who I am. The Self is eternally sentient.

Third, because **it is limited and not constantly present**. If I'm the body, why don't I exist in the dream and deep sleep state? I do, in fact, exist in those states - but not as a physical body. Even in the dream state where I may have a body, the dream body is not the same as the waking state body. If I'm the two bodies, there are two “me's,” an obvious impossibility. In deep sleep I have neither a gross waking nor a subtle dream body. Therefore the body isn't me. The Self is unlimited and omnipresent.

Forth, because **it changes**. The Self is immutable.

Fifth, because **the body has a shape**. The Self is formless being.

Sixth, because **the body depends on its constituent parts and the elements**. The Self is partless and self-dependent.

I AM THE MIND¹⁹

At a dinner party the hostess looked down her nose at one of her guests who was, in her opinion, unsuitably attired. The husband, noticing that his wife was miffed, solicitously inquired,

"What's the matter dear?"

"She hurt me," sniffed the wife.

The statement "She hurt me" indicates a confusion of the "me," the Self with mind, the emotional function.

¹⁸ Vedanta defines the body as (1) the “food sheath” and (2) the five elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth.

¹⁹ The word “mind” has many meanings in spiritual literature. In this context “mind” means the feeling and emotional function.

We aren't our feelings and emotions for the same reasons we aren't the body.

I AM THE INTELLECT

The third pernicious layer of ignorance is our identification with ideas, thoughts, and ideals. "I'm a doctor, lawyer, communist, capitalist, Christian, Republican, mother, father, gay, black, lesbian, beautiful, ugly, rich, poor, intelligent, stupid etc. are spiritually incorrect statements. The "I" is the Awareness in whose light all ideas are known. The intellect is not the Self for the reasons listed above.

I AM THE EGO

Two technical Vedantic words, *jiva* and *ahamkara* refer to different but related ego ideas. A *jiva*²⁰ or ego is the Self embodied, a living being. Plants and animals, insects and microbes, as well as humans are embodied beings. This definition says nothing about the views of these egos, what they think about themselves or the world, or how they behave. These embodied beings, you and I, are variously conceived of as "rays" or "emanations" of nameless formless Consciousness, "man cast in the image of God." The *jivas* are **apparently** separate from Consciousness. Just as a wave is the ocean in a limited form, the *jivas* are said to be embodied Consciousness. Though actually the one Self they seem to be different entities owing to their association with many bodies.

Ahamkara is a compound. *Aham* means "I" and *kara* means a notion or idea. So *ahamkara* is the notion or idea a *jiva* has about itself. Egos who have no notion they're one with the Self have a plethora of ideas about themselves. This more reasonable and helpful definition sees ego not as an inherently flawed person but as a perfect being temporarily flawed by an incorrect self-concept - the idea that it is separate from the world, from other beings, and from the Self.²¹

The ego is not the Self because it lives and dies, is a object of perception, subject to change, and limited.

The knowledge of who I am not is only useful until I wake up whereupon it dissolves into the limitlessness of my re-discovered identity.

²⁰ Jiva means "to live."

²¹ If the ego is merely a false concept and not real it can be destroyed by knowledge.

***"The world like a dream
full of attachments and aversions
seems real until the awakening."***

(6)

We all believe the desires, feelings, emotions, thoughts, ideas, fears, intuitions, opinions, memories, etc. constantly playing in our minds are real. Though temporarily existent, they are not ultimately real, i.e. substantial and enduring. Reality, the Self, exists in all periods of time, past, present, and future, before the past and after the future, and in all states of consciousness, waking, dream, and deep sleep and beyond. Reality, unlike everything we know, doesn't depend on anything else for its existence nor can it be resolved into anything else.

The inner phenomena projected on the screen of Consciousness as our personal worlds are only a flow of tendencies and short-lived subjective events devoid of lasting meaning - like a dream. In a dream everything seems real to the dreamer. Someone kisses me and I feel love. One of my thoughts in the form of an angry beast bites me and I feel pain. As soon as I wake up, however, I see that, with reference to my present state, it was all unreal.

Self knowledge is waking up from the belief that the waking, dream and deep sleep state "worlds" are real. "World" means field of experience, the experiencing subject and the experienced objects. As revealed in the following analysis,²² that any or all of these worlds are considered reality is simply an opinion.

THE WAKER, DREAMER, AND DEEP SLEEPER

As human beings we are not one, but three experiencing entities. The first, the waking state ego (*See the bottom left third of fig.1.*) is Consciousness, the Self shining through the body-mind-intellect bundle experiencing the world of material objects and the world of feelings, emotions, thoughts, ideas, memories, etc.

Everyone primarily views him or herself as a waker. When I say "me" in common conversation, I am referring to myself as a waking state entity.

²² This powerful *prakriya* is not actually included in Shankar's Atma Bodh. In fact the three state analysis is the subject of the Mandukya Upanishad. I've included it here because it illustrates the idea in this verse. In a small book entitled "Mandukya Upanishad," I've given a comprehensive version of the teaching.

The belief that I am a waker comes with the conviction that the waking state physical, emotional, and intellectual objects are real, enduring.

The waker's consciousness is **turned outward** - the Self shining through the senses, mind, intellect, illumining their respective objects. Idealistic metaphysics' statement that no world exists apart from the perceiver means the Self doesn't see a world unless It shines through the

THE WAKER, DREAMER, AND DEEP SLEEPER

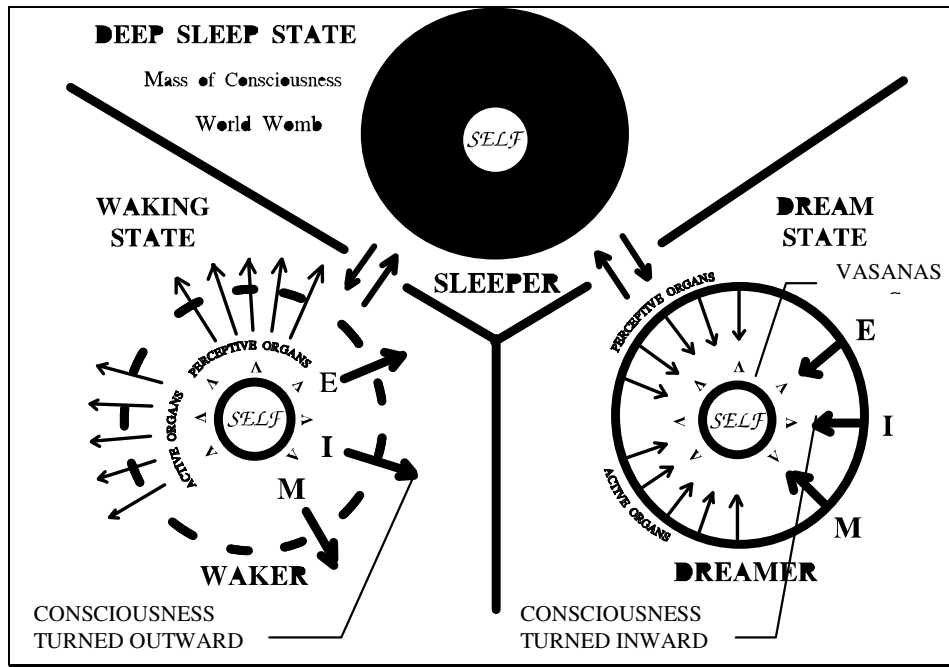


fig.1

body, mind or intellect, not that the physical world doesn't exist. Though the material world exists independently of the waker's perceptions it doesn't exist apart from Consciousness, the Self.

The waker is a non-stop consumer. The Sanskrit literature describing the waker calls it "the one with thirteen mouths:" the ten senses, mind, intellect, and ego. The physical body consumes the five elements in their various permutation combinations,²³ the mind constantly chews emotion, the intellect eats ideas, and the ego devours any experience it (incorrectly) believes will make it feel whole, adequate, and happy.

²³ For details of the five elements and their relationship with the body and mind see Meditation, The Science of the Self, Chapter 2.

The dreamer (*lower right third of fig.1*), Consciousness **turned inward**, enjoys a world similar in some respects to the waking state world and radically different in others. In the dream state The Self illumines only subtle objects. Subtle objects are dreams, the *samskaras*, appearing in the subtle body in pictorial form. Like the waker, the dreamer believes he or she and his or her world is real, and is equipped with dream senses to consume dream objects, a dream mind to emote and feel, a dream intellect to think dream thoughts, and a dream ego to experience the dream life. In the ancient texts the dreamer is referred to as the “shining one”,²⁴ a term indicating its nature as Consciousness. Dreams appear bathed in light, even though the waking senses are inactive, because the Self, Consciousness, shines through the dreamer, just as it shines through the waker.

The sleeper is called *pragna* or **mass of consciousness**. In waking and dream states, consciousness flows either outward and inward but in sleep it loses direction and becomes formless. The sleeper ego is extremely subtle, its presence only known through inference: when we return to the waking state we know we slept well, experienced the Self as limitlessness/bliss. Since the Self is the only other factor in the deep sleep state (there are no subtle or gross objects) It has to be limitlessness/bliss, the object of the sleeper’s extremely subtle ego.

The deep sleep state is free of the waking and dream egos and objects because the *samskaras* that projected them have become dormant, hence it is referred to as the “seed” state. When the “seeds” sprout, one becomes a waker or a dreamer and experiences the appropriate world

Experience contradicts the view that the sleep state is a void. Sanskrit literature refers to it as “the womb,” because our waking and dream worlds emerge from it. When one wakes up in the morning one’s whole life is neatly laid out, consistent with the past, to the degree that we even remember the same language spoken the day before, suggesting that previous experience had simply entered a dormant state.

These three states and egos are known to everyone and constitute the totality of our experience. An interesting question posed by this analysis is “Who am I?” If I’m the waking ego, which I’ve been totally conditioned to think I am, what happens to me when I become a sleeper? I’ve quite willingly surrendered everything essential to my idea of myself (my body, mind, intellect, and all my physical possessions) to turn into a mass of consciousness and experience limitlessness.

²⁴ *Taijaisa*

If I'm the sleeper ego, the blissfully limitless subtle being, then why do I sacrifice that status for all the limitations and insecurities of the waking or dream worlds? The dreamer identity is insufficient because I always sacrifice it to become a waker or a sleeper. So my status as any one ego or ego aspect is limited and my true identity open to question.

IF I'M REAL, I HAVE TO EXIST ALL THE TIME

The answer to "Who am I" is that I am not any off these egos or ego states. If I'm real, I have to exist all the time. I can't suddenly be one thing one minute and something else the next. Irrespective of my state, I experience life as a simple single complete conscious being because I exist in the waking, dream, and deep sleep states independent of the waker, dreamer and deep sleeper.

As what?

As the Self, the Awareness, witness to the three states.²⁵ Outside of meditation, the Self is probably easiest to recognize in the dream state because the physical senses are inactive. The dream is playing on the screen of the mind like a movie. Though physical light is absent and the eyes closed, the dream ego and the dream events are clearly illumined, a phenomenon referred to as "lucid" dreaming. The lucidity is the Self temporarily functioning as the dreamer, "the shining one." However, identification with the dream ego and its doings prevents us from properly appreciating the dream light, the Self.

The Self is unknown in the waking state for the same reason. Preoccupied with the happenings in our worlds, we are unaware that the sense objects and our thoughts and feelings are bathed in Awareness.

In deep sleep the waking and dream egos are dissolved into their source, the dormant seeds of their past actions, so they aren't aware of anything external. However, even though one doesn't exist as an externally or internally conscious ego in the deep sleep state one can report a good sleep because a very subtle ego remnant remains, permitting the experience of limitless and bliss.²⁶

Like the appearance of silver in mother of pearl, the world

²⁵ Note in fig. 1 that the Self remains unchanged irrespective of the state it illumines.

²⁶ The Sanskrit term for bliss, *ananda*, means limitlessness. When we experience ourselves without limits we are completely happy.

seems real until the Self, the underlying reality, is realized.”

(7)

On seeing the non-dual Self, the underlying reality, one wakes up from the dream of life.

A street drunk woke up one bright morning with a terrible hangover and searched his pockets for change. Not even enough for a cup of coffee! The day was hot, the pavement gooey under his feet. Rubbing his eyes and looking around, he spied a quarter near a drink machine in front of a convenience store. Figuring someone must have dropped it when buying a coke, he happily thought, "There's my morning cup of coffee!" Rushing over, he reached down to pick it up, but it was only a coke bottle cap pressed in the warm pavement and worn shiny by the tires of passing cars.

Just as the apparent quarter borrows its luster from the real brightness of the bottlecap, the shiny and attractive world of the senses seems an independent self-sustaining reality, but its attractiveness is borrowed from the Self, luminous Consciousness. When the bottlecap is seen for what it is, the quarter vanishes, because it's only in the mind. In meditation and/or at intense life interfaces, our personal view is often superseded by Self's causing our apparent reality and all its limitations to disappear.

*"Like waves in the ocean,
the worlds arise, live, and dissolve in
the Supreme Self, the substance
and cause of everything."*

(8)

At times we've all looked at the inner and outer worlds with wonder and awe. Their beauty, like the beauty of this verse, is impossible to dismiss. Where do they come from? The author likens them to waves and the Self to an ocean. The waves are nothing but the ocean, though seemingly separate entities. According to Vedanta the whole material universe is merely a finite wave in Consciousness. Out of Consciousness it emerges, sustains itself for a few trillion years and subsides back into It. Though it appears solid because we are perceiving it through material instruments, the senses, it is actually formless Spirit.

As above so below. We can't see the physical universe pass through a complete cycle, but observing our own inner universe can give us an idea of the process of creation. In the limitlessness of sleep a dream arises, plays

itself out and disappears back into the void. Throughout the day thoughts and feelings arise and subside in endless succession in our minds like ripples on a pond. Both the subjective and objective worlds, psyche and matter, are waves in the ocean of Pure Consciousness.

***"The world of animate and
inanimate objects is projected by
imagination on the all-pervading substrate."
(9)***

As Selves each of us is master or mistress of his or her destiny. Just as the universe is a combination of spirit and matter projected by the all-powerful Self's macrocosmic mind on the formless screen of Awareness,²⁷ each of us projects our own personal waking state universe.²⁸

To "project" means to consciously or unconsciously assign meaning and value. For example, two persons smoke a cigarette, an enjoyable experience for one, painful for the other. All objects in the universe, subtle and gross, are value neutral, but take on personal meaning because of an inner projecting power or "imagination."

We share the same creative force with the Self, or God.²⁹ In addition to the fact that the Self consciously projects the universe and we generally don't, the Self's infinite will gives it the power to create, sustain, and destroy over eons. The Self, Pure Awareness, is the essence of the individual as well as the essence of the universe.

Projections cause human beings suffering because they are thought to be real. **The stated purpose of psychological therapies and spiritual techniques is to put us back in touch with reality by reducing unconscious projections and the problems they generate.**

In Awareness, the Self, there are no projections. It is the "light" in which the mind and its projections are known. Self-Realization is liberation from the mind and its projections.

***"Just as bracelets, bangles, and rings
are gold in various forms, the forms in this***

²⁷ Referred to in the verse as the "all-pervading substrate"

²⁸ The universal projection is called *Maya* and the individual's imagination/projection *avidya*. *Maya* is "that which isn't. *Avidya* is "not-science." Strictly speaking, *maya* and *avidya* are the ignorance that cause the projections.

²⁹ Not everyone who sees the Self sees it as formless Spirit. For the purpose of worship, the Self personifies itself as God in minds incapable of seeing It without form.

world are nothing but Awareness.”

(10)

Melt down a golden ring or bracelet and it becomes a lump of gold. Though the form modifies, nothing substantially changes. Similarly, all the objects in the world are only Awareness, but conditioning projects them as solid and separate objects. Melt down our conditioning and everything appears as Awareness - a difficult task because we have invested our perceptions with so much personal meaning.

How far is a wave from the ocean? From the wave's standpoint it is a separate form. From the ocean's standpoint, however, waves cannot exist without the ocean. To think of oneself as a totally separate and unique individual is the spiritual equivalent of a wave imagining itself apart from the ocean.

The purpose of spiritual life is to discover in what sense we are and are not separate from our Source by disassociating from our conditioning. Only the Self is free of conditioning. **We cannot become “perfect” i.e. turn our relative selves into the Self by changing our conditioning,** but when attachment to conditioning is severed, Self realization exposes the relationship between the conditioned and unconditioned selves. From the state of the Self there are strong arguments for letting the conditioned self be, however: it isn't real, it isn't you, and it can't affect you in any way. And, as the verse insists, “all the forms of this world are nothing but Awareness.”

*“Space seems broken and diverse
because of the many forms in it.*

Remove the forms and pure space remains.

So too with the omnipresent Self.”

(11)

On a perfectly empty flat space sits a roofless house with many rooms. Looking down from above, notice how each space (bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and garage) seems different because of its association with the walls and objects in the rooms. Destroy the walls and only indivisible space remains.

The inner self or psyche, a manifestation of formless Consciousness, is comprised of several rooms: mind, the emotional or feeling function, furnished with love, anger, feeling, greed, tenderness, passion, lust, hatred, jealousy; intellect, decorated with ideas, thoughts, ideals, dreams, fantasies,

imaginations; ego, filled with selfishness, fear, vanity, arrogance, and desire; and the Unconscious, a vast storeroom cluttered with the myriad seeds of past actions. Each room appears a separate conscious entity with its own name and form but when the mind walls are destroyed only one conscious entity, formless Awareness, remains.

Failure to see that the apparently disparate parts of the Self are one leaves another option. Spiritual practice slowly and patiently empties the rooms and pulls down the walls keeping us from wholeness. For example, a pure crystal resting on a blue cloth appears blue. Remove the cloth and its sparkling clear nature is known. When the Subtle Body is purified the Self is revealed and one sees that one was never “broken and diverse” in the first place.

***“The individual’s Gross Body,
the medium through which
pleasure and pain is experienced,
is composed of matter.
The type of body is determined
by past actions.”***

(12)

That the body is comprised of food consumed and shaped by activity is obvious, but why such a variety of human forms? Or, how do experiences from the past come to determine the characteristics of the body that will be the medium of experience in this one?

Nobody questions heredity today, yet the idea of reincarnation has yet to gain widespread acceptance, even though both attempt to explain essentially the same phenomenon - how experience passes through time to program the future. Heredity describes how certain physical tendencies in former generations "reincarnate," return to flesh. Microbiology has discovered that these tendencies, which are the result of an ancestor's previous experience, are stored in a very subtle part of the cells, the DNA, and passed on to succeeding generations.

Spiritual science, which describes two additional bodies, the Subtle and Causal, contends that our psychic life, like physical experience, has also evolved a way of surviving physical death and remanifesting. We have material science to thank for an increasingly detailed and accurate picture of the processes that make up the physical body. Psychology, a relative infant science, is largely responsible for our rudimentary knowledge of the Subtle

and Causal Bodies. In psychological language the Subtle Body, which will be discussed in the commentaries on the next verse, is the conscious mind. The phenomena playing in it outpicture even subtler elements, the *vasanas* or *samskaras*, that make up the Causal body or Unconscious mind.

If its true that we have two other bodies, bodies that may be much more essentially "us" than the physical, how is it that they come into being, what happens to them at death, and what is their relationship to the physical body?

The verse begins, "Determined for each individual by past actions." Imagine this situation. On the first day of creation a mountain shaped like a perfect cone thrust out of the earth and the first drop of rain struck the mountain's very tip.

What path would the drop take down the mountain?

The probability of any possible path is one hundred percent. It flipped a coin and slid down the south side leaving an imperceptible little trail.

Time passed and a second drop fell. What path would it take? High odds favor all paths but marginally greater odds favor the south side. It followed tradition and etched the existing path a little deeper. After thousands of rain storms other paths developed and the mountain sported canyons, ravines, and gullies all around.

And the original path had become a great river valley.

We obviously can't go back to the time when our psyches were perfectly clear like the Consciousness from which they emerged, but let's pretend we can. Let's say that on the day the first mountain sprung up the first man strolled out of his cave and looked around just as the first bear wandered out from behind the first tree. The bear spied the man and decided to have lunch. The man, however, picked up a huge rock and struck the bear so hard it died instantly. And, in life's first irony, first man had the world's first bearburger for lunch.

What kind of a day was it for our hero? He couldn't say because it was his first experience and he had no others with which to compare it. As he sat contentedly munching his burger the experience replayed several times, gradually diminishing in intensity and frequency. As evening fell it left his consciousness entirely and he dropped off to sleep.

On the second day first man bumped into first woman, one thing led to another, and they made first love, a delightful experience. When he fell asleep after dinner the memory accompanied him and cooked up delicious dreams.

The next few days saw many experiences, some good, some not so good. One morning, a week later, he woke up, ate his porridge, and looked out the entrance to his cave to see a hungry bear looking in. Suddenly an exciting and emotional replay of the encounter with the first bear flashed in his primitive consciousness and he understood what to expect if he ventured out.

Each experience, no matter how trivial, leaves a trace in our consciousness, like an elementary particle carving a track in a cloud chamber. The deep memory in which experience is saved, unlike Intellect's fact and figure memory, is the Causal Body, the Unconscious, which not only saves the essence of every experience but all subjective reactions: the feelings, emotions, and thoughts arising in the mind at the time.

What a blessing to have his experiences stored out of consciousness! He could get up in the morning, take his porridge, and venture out into the light of day without having the past intrude, very much like the first day.

But as time passed he noticed a change. One day, walking along without a care, he began to feel a little out of sorts - as if he wanted something. Trying to picture what he wanted made him uncomfortable and he was unable to keep his attention on the pristine world around.

Suddenly he knew! A picture of first woman appeared in his mind and the experience of their tryst vividly flooded his consciousness. Because the memory was so pleasurable and first woman no longer available he became unhappy. He wandered about in this state for several days when, as luck would have it, he met the second woman of the world. To make a long story short, they made love, and first man was happy once more.

After repeatedly experiencing love the Causal Body realized it was running out of storage space and edited the extraneous details: the color of her hair, the cut of her garment, and her name, saving only important details, the grunts and groans and, (of course) the big moment when the world stopped. As more experience flowed in it merged the experiences of many different women into the essence of woman, compacted myriad episodes into the essence of love, and created a file marked "high priority." In spite of the fact that the memories were meant to remain "sub" conscious, the woman memory eventually took on a life of its own, popping into his conscious mind, the Subtle Body, with disturbing regularity. Each repetition cut a deeper scar in the pristine landscape of his subconscious mind until it resembled first mountain after millions of years of wind and weather.

Now, sadly, when first man awoke he had an agenda. No longer able to sit blissfully in front of the cave enjoying the scenery as he'd done in the

good old days, he longed for a companion. Just as rain tends to flow down the mountain's deepest valleys, our hero's consciousness rushed wildly down the deep sexual groove in the Causal Body, filling his conscious mind with desire.

His routine changed and he became increasingly indifferent to the practical details of life. Instead of enjoying random walks through the forest, staying home patching cracks in his cave or stocking winter stores, we now find first man haunting the first bar in hopes of finding love - day and night. The more he thought about a mate, the more he thought about a mate.

His emotional state was being saved and recycled too. Simply obsessing over the memory of previous love generated great desire. And with each longing the channel in the Causal Body got deeper and deeper, flooding the mind with fantasies, tossing it hither and thither like a small boat in a storm, driving him nearly crazy.

Furthermore, he started to notice a strange correspondence between his all-consuming desire and the probability of bumping into a first woman type. Were these not the chance encounters they seemed? In the beginning outer life seemed to be creating his inner reality, but now his cravings seemed control his destiny. Eventually he reached a point where inner reality became as vivid and real as the outer.

Because a theory cannot be verified with a known means of knowledge does not necessarily invalidate it. The history of science, for example, might be seen as the documentation of the destruction of hardened beliefs in light of new knowledge. Although the words "determined by past actions" could be interpreted to refer to only actions in the present birth, the verse is actually referring to the momentum from previous births which, like those of the first man, remain after death as "seeds" or "impressions" in the Unconscious mind. The Unconscious Mind is a dynamic megamemory that subtly programs every impulse of the ego self, impulses that will eventually create a new physical body to act out unfulfilled subconscious impressions. According to the theory, subtle bodies reincarnate because, like the first man, they believe the joy is in the object.

Materialists, who see life as a one-time happenstance event, don't take the psyche into account because it is thought to be an epiphenomenon, the result of biochemical processes. When the physical body goes, the psyche, a chemical by-product, is apparently meant to just dissolve into thin air. Religion's remarkable idea doesn't pretend to be scientific - at death we meet up with God who either sends us on up to heaven or down to hell depending in His evaluation of our past deeds - minus the physical body of course. Even

here, however, the subtle part, the soul,³⁰ does not miraculously dematerialize when the physical body gives up the ghost.

The theory of reincarnation suggests that when the physical body dies, the conscious mind separates and, propelled by the momentum of all previous activities, seeks out and takes up residence in the fertilized egg implanted in the uterine wall a short time after conception. Before this marvelous event, experienced by the mother as “quickening,” no separate being lives in the mother’s body. Now that the individual has secured a point of entry into the material world it gestates until it’s capable of living outside the womb where it can work out unfilled *samskaras*.

The *samskaras*, like seeds, carry a sort of psychic DNA, the potentialities and proclivities built up in previous births. Exceedingly dynamic, they supply both the blueprint for the new life and the energy necessary to translate it into living reality, the so-called “will to live.” On the physical level they program the DNA, the determinant of physical characteristics, and on the psychological, the information that will outpicture as the subtle body (mind, intellect, ego), the character or personality that will develop. Their technical Sanskrit term is “*vasanas*,” fragrances, or “*samskaras*,”³¹ formations, and their psychological address is the *karana sharira*, the Causal Body, or in western terminology, the Unconscious. These seedlike energy “waves” of consciousness, being subtler than physical matter are unaffected by the death and rebirth of the body. When a new physical entity is established in the uterine wall they propel the subtle body to enter the physical. The parent's *samskaras* are instrumental in attracting a particular individual to the womb. Though there are apparently exceptions, nature, through the agency of the macrocosmic mind, matches reincarnating souls with parents who can supply them with the situation necessary to continue their spiritual evolution. Thus matter, from the reincarnation perspective, is thought to be a creation of Consciousness for the purpose of It's spiritual evolution.

How do we know of this hidden process? Obviously the senses are useless because they cease to function at death and are incapable of perceiving the *vasanas* which are even subtler than subatomic wave/particles. Inference, a valid means of knowledge, suggests that reincarnation happens but doesn't reveal how seeds of past activity manifest in the present. Reincarnationists claim that this knowledge is obtained directly from yogis

³⁰ I've used the word “soul” in these commentaries to refer to the Subtle Body.

³¹ A *vasana* is the trace left in the sub or unconscious by an individual action or thought. When a number of *vasanas* accumulate they become a *samskara*, a formation, or complex.

who, through a mystic method, remain conscious during the birth/death process.³²

Intriguing as the idea may be, physical reincarnation plays a modest spiritual role. The opening stanza, it will be noted, does not list a single physical qualification for liberation. Though pursuit of spiritual goals may be enhanced by a healthy body, physical suffering often motivates striving for higher goals. Spirituality is concerned with an individual's bodily attachments, opinions, ideas, and attitudes - not the body itself which the verse says is just a counter across which experience is transacted.

To counteract the tendency to glamorize, romanticize, and worship it we should remind ourselves that it is little more than a meaty waste tube. Filled with blood, bile, mucus, urine, and feces it is a breeding ground for disease, and only seems sentient because of its association with and proximity to the spiritual essence enlivening it. Merely an instrument, it should be neither venerated nor reviled.

Pleasure and pain, neither inherently good nor bad, are instructional stimuli delivered by the body to the conscious being within who interprets them according its *vasana*-induced conditioning.

Only with a dispassionate knowledge of the body can body consciousness be transcended, the first self-realization stage. Conversely, an unscientific understanding of this dearest of conditionings makes spiritual progress next to impossible. The idea behind meditation is to separate the spiritual essence, the living being, from the non-living material conditionings surrounding it. These conditionings may be visualized as layers clinging to a central core - like an onion. Discrimination,³³ the technique unfolded in this text, is peeling off the layers in one's understanding to get at the essence, the Self. The next layer after the gross body,

***"The Subtle Body, is composed of
the instruments of experience:
the ten senses, the five pranas, mind and intellect."
(13)***

The ten organs are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, hands, feet, speech, anus, and sex. The activities of the organs are controlled by the life force or *prana* which is responsible for health and vitality. The *prana* in its passive

³² A fascinating book, "Introduction to Tantra," by Lama Yeshe, as do many Eastern texts, discusses this process in detail.

³³ *Viveka*

state manifests as awareness and acts as a perceptive or knowledge-gathering function in the form of the first five organs. In its dynamic state, it functions as the active or karmic organs - the last five. Another active function of the life force is *apana* - the capacity of the organism to reject unwanted elements from the body (wastes, toxins, etc.). Thirdly, *prana* functions as *samana* in the digestive system transforming food into energy which is equitably distributed (*vyana*) according to the need of each part. If walking, more goes to the legs, if cutting wood, more goes to the arms. The *prana* in the form of *udana* is the power to eject the soul from the body, a kind of reincarnational time clock counting down to the moment of death.

The subtle body is the instrument of perception. The points on the physical body where sense perceptions seem to occur are not actually the sense organs. For example, the eyes are only "places of light"³⁴ or windows through which the power of vision, a subtle body component, beams forth. Perception is only possible when the mind is behind the sense organ. The eyes may report visual stimuli and the organ of sight illumine them, but they have no meaning if the mind is occupied elsewhere - daydreaming, meditating, or thinking. Common experience shows that when communicating to someone lost in thought or otherwise preoccupied the communication does not register.

The Self, the conscious being, perceives through the senses, mind, and intellect. In its passive function the mind picks up on feelings and emotions vibrating in the world around and passes them on to the Self. In its active function, it expresses the same. The intellect is the most sophisticated of the subtle body components, capable of diverse functions - thinking, discriminating, willing, reasoning, symbolizing, imagining, intuiting, meditating, and so on. The instrument through which the Self perceives the idea world, intellect functions as the ego idea which, motivated by an endless stream of fear and desire, generates all our actions.

The subtle body is the field of practice. The Self is immutable so nothing can be done to change it. Physical work only marginally affects the subtle body. Even the Unconscious can only be altered in the waking state through subtle body, work. Spiritual practice is designed to purify the subtle body, transforming it into an instrument capable of receiving Self-Knowledge.

***"Ignorance, indescribable and beginningless,
is the Causal Body. Know for certain***

³⁴ Golaya. "Go" is Sanskrit for light, "laya" for place.

**the Self is other than these
three conditioned bodies."**

(14)

Perceptive instruments (mind, intellect, senses) and objects of perception are required for experience. Before experience is possible, therefore, two events have happened - one macrocosmic (the material universe has been projected), and the other microcosmic (the perceptive instruments have evolved), the interaction between them constituting an experience, the basis of time. Actually, time begins when the third perception/experience occurs, being the interval between the first and the second seen from the third. These two events, the projection of the universe and the evolution of the perceptive instruments by the conscious beings, are the result of a preceding non-event or Ignorance. Hence Ignorance, existing out of time, is causal and beginningless.

From a spiritual viewpoint, Ignorance means non-apprehension of the Self or Reality, not lack of education or intelligence. If we fail to "experience" the timeless Self we take our experience of the mind's time-bound projections as reality, suffering and enjoying accordingly.

The purpose of Vedanta is to give knowledge of Reality - one's Self. Ignorance, intellect, and the concept of time are not real, because they don't exist forever and in all states of consciousness. Where is time and thought in the causal state? Nor do they exist in the Self. Because it is too subtle to be perceived by the Subtle Body, the Causal Body, can only be inferred. To ask the subtle body to know the causal body, except inferentially, is like asking the eyes to see the mind.

Ignorance exists and doesn't exist. From the Self's absolute point of view it doesn't exist (just as mirage water doesn't exist from the sand's) though it is perceived to exist from the ego's. How can we describe something that neither exists nor doesn't exist?

Finally, Ignorance is causal, the source and origin of false perception and therefore action.³⁵ Because the scorching desert sands aren't seen for what they are, they seem to be covered with water. The inability to perceive Reality, the Self, allows us to project the vast superstructure of thought, feeling, memory, and action we call life, take it for real, and rush out to find happiness in it.

³⁵ See verse 3

At this point in the text the “Not Self,”³⁶ the three bodies and their respective fields, has been explained. When the energy invested in the false belief that one is the limited self is released, deep insight occurs and the Self is realized. Because the Self is not an object of perception it cannot be directly taught, hence the Socratic or negative approach. "Not this. Not this." says the inscrutable Upanishad.

***"Through discriminative analysis³⁷
separate the Pure Self within
from the sheaths covering it
like wheat from chaff."
(15)***

The “sheaths” referred to are the three bodies, which seem³⁸ to cover the Self. The separation of the bodies from the Self is not astral travel or “out of body” experience. The Self can’t be out of the bodies because it was never “in” them in the first place, although the experience of the realization of the Self, a shift from the body’s to the Self’s point of view, often initially feels as if we’ve left the body simply because we are so deeply conditioned to take the physical body as a point of reference in all perceptions. In fact, the bodies are “in” the Self, in the sense that they are within the scope of the Self’s panoramic vision. The body, a tiny physical cup indeed, could never contain the formless ocean of Awareness.

The text has done a credible job separating the Self and the Not Self.³⁹ Putting the knowledge into practice, mindfulness, means keeping up with the

³⁶ The Vedantic method in this text is called, *drk-drksha viveka*, the discrimination between the seer (the Self) and the seen (the three bodies).

³⁷ Self analysis in Vedanta does not mean analyzing one’s ego, it’s memories, thoughts, and feelings with the idea of making it happy. Since the ego is considered “not-self” it is not considered worth fixing. Often, however, it needs to be “fixed” through therapy or other methods to the point where it’s qualified to practice discrimination. Obviously someone with psychological problems is not capable of practicing discrimination. Healthy individuals can easily discriminate away problems.

³⁸ In fact there is no covering, only the semblance of covering, projected by Ignorance.

³⁹ In traditional Vedantic *gurukulas* the discrimination between the Self and the bodies, like all Vedantic *prakriyas* (teachings) is brought about in “real time” by a student listening to a realized teacher unfold the teaching. The study of written text is thought to be secondary means of knowledge. Though Self realization often happens in the teaching setting, if the mind is partially purified the realization can easily be lost. On the other hand a highly purified mind might permanently realize the Self with the aid of rudimentary written instructions. Reading texts with the expectation of experiencing the Self is probably futile since the words need to be taken as they are. Without the help of a teacher who knows the original meanings and is established in the Self the mind is prone to interpreting the meaning of the words according to it’s personal experience, prejudices, and opinions.

ego/mind, following it through its daily ups and downs, dispassionately observing the quality, texture, and volume of thought and feeling, not with the idea of making it “better” or solving its problems, but to understand its nature. Purification slowly evolves out of awareness, grasping the “whys.” When the meditator understands the ignorance motivating his or her approach to life unspiritual motivations can be easily discarded. Attempting to change one’s ego through religious or psychological practice without understanding born of discriminative awareness only results in superficial and temporary changes.

The point of watching the mind is not to watch the mind but to become aware of the watcher, an event that takes place almost imperceptibly day by day as one watches. Awareness of the watcher means that practice is becoming subtle and raises a new question - who is the watcher?

Is it the ego? The mind? The intellect? The Self? All or none of the above? Is the ego to be discriminated out of the picture? If so who will do it? If the Self is the discriminator, what will It discriminate, since from Its position nothing other than it exists? These and other equally weighty determinations present themselves to the mind of the discriminator. Needless to say working through this thicket is a tricky business, yet with perseverance the truth is revealed.

The discriminator should calmly and consciously observe whatever the mind has to offer, using the Self/not-self paradigm to clear the thoughts producing extroverting and agitating energies.⁴⁰ Once it becomes second nature a positive change in awareness occurs because discrimination causes non-attachment - not allowing the mind’s problems, which often take years to purify, to sap energy and inspiration.

To construct the foundation of one’s life on the not-self’s⁴¹ shifting sands is to court disillusionment. Taking the emotions as reality causes one to suffer continual ups and downs. Who hasn’t failed miserably trying to live out a scheme or fantasy concocted by an undiscriminating intellect or taken the body as one’s primary source of pleasure and inspiration long past the

The inability to grasp the truth in the written word and the paucity of competent teachers has caused many to condemn the “intellectual” approach to Self realization as useless. However, there are still Vedantic gurukulas in India that employ the old method and regularly produce realized souls.

⁴⁰ While emotions, with the exception of pure love, are “not self,” renunciation of negative emotion without removing the thought producing it will not purify the mind. Negative emotions are the result of incorrect ideas about oneself or the world. When the ideas producing stress and conflict are removed the emotional center becomes loving and peaceful.

⁴¹ The three bodies.

time when it was appropriate? Greed, ambition, power, pride, lust, jealousy, possessiveness, avarice, acquisitiveness - the mind is a cornucopia of unworthy values we take for real and pursue with intensity. Yet none last.

The Self alone endures, the only reality.

THE CORRECT VIEW OF EMPTINESS

An object that can't stand alone or can be resolved into another object or the Self on analysis should be considered "not-self" and therefore unreal.⁴² The physical body can be resolved into its constituent elements: air, fire, water, earth. Therefore it is unreal. Are the elements reality? Only with reference to the body. The elements can be resolved into smaller units; let's say atoms. As we go down and down, more and more space, the fifth "element," appears between the units until they dissolve into nothingness. Now only space and the Self remain. Since space is not conscious and depends on Awareness it can be resolved into Awareness.⁴³ Can awareness be resolved? Does it depend on anything other than itself? Is it known by anything other than itself? As the Self, the Knower, you are unresolvable, irreducible.

Time is apparent. As we increase the units from nanoseconds to milliseconds to seconds and on up to years, centuries, ages, etc. the space between the units increases until time eventually runs out and only space, which on analysis turns out to be nothing more than a concept, remains. Space is a concept because it depends on the conscious being experiencing it. The view of it by a person walking from New York to San Francisco is quite different from that of an air traveler flying from New York to San Francisco. Concepts can be further reduced to mind and mind to Consciousness. Consciousness is not reducible because before you know of the existence of an object you have to be there as consciousness. Even to speak of objects that one doesn't know or objects which are known to exist independent of an individual's experience implies Consciousness. There is no one or no thing

⁴² Unreal or apparent doesn't mean that an object isn't experienciable, simply that it doesn't last - or that it depends on something else. The famous Upanishadic statement "*Brahma satyam jagan mithya*" is often translated "The Self is real, the world unreal." But because we tend to think that experience is real and therefore might be inclined to question Vedanta's contention that experience is not real, it might be better to translate "*mithya*" as "apparent," a less provocative term. *Brahma satyan jagan mithya* means "The limitless Self is real, the world is apparent."

⁴³ Space depends on awareness in that without awareness we have no knowledge of space. Awareness, however, does not depend on space because space is insentient. Awareness is self-aware i.e. it needs to other light to illumine it.

outside Consciousness to evaluate it or reduce it to anything. Consciousness alone is real.

Or if this analysis seems too abstract, consider that time is different for every individual and that the same individual experiences time differently. Where time real it would be exactly the same for every creature. One hour in an Iraqi torture chamber does not equal one hour at an exciting movie. Time, like space, is a function of the being that conceives or experiences it.

Time and space are only in the mind. In the Self they don't exist. In deep sleep, a very familiar experience, they don't exist. In no way do they fit our definition of reality.

All Subtle Body phenomena depend on each other, the mind a rich tapestry of interwoven interdependent psychic threads. Ego, one major psychic component, is unreal because it depends on Self ignorance. Ignorance is reducible to knowledge, because it ends when knowledge arises. Knowledge depends on Awareness. Ego is also unreal because it doesn't exist in deep sleep where all differences are dissolved. Feelings and emotions are unreal because they depend on interpretation by the intellect of ever-changing sense experiences, memory, and ideas, the person who loves his or her spouse until he or she discovers that the spouse is unfaithful, for example.

The concepts "real" and "unreal" are reducible to intellect. Intellect reduces to thought, thought to the thinker, the thinker to Awareness. No thought ever thought itself.

Anything you can think about or experience depends on you, the Awareness. Without you there is nothing.

That nothing on any level of existence is merely an apparent reality is difficult to accept. **The teachings of Vedanta are not intended to cement into the mind clever spiritual concepts that accurately describe the nature of the objective and subjective worlds but to encourage us to think about these worlds in a radical way.** When we discriminate the inner worlds defrost and the rigid ideas that make life painful break up - like ice in spring. If the intellect no longer makes uninformed judgments about an apparent reality or fritters away its time gathering objective knowledge but turns upon itself and thinks clearly from the Self's platform our responses to life become natural and spontaneous. And ultimately, although discrimination means we must face continual disillusionment, in the end we are paradoxically led to the realization that everything on every level of existence is real - because it is the Self.

Simply knowing that everything is apparent or unreal however, does not tell us, except by default, where to look to find Reality. How can we separate wheat from the chaff, not knowing where the wheat is? The next verse tells us where to look to find the Self.

***"Though pervading everything
the Self doesn't shine in everything.
It reveals itself in the purified inner being
like a reflection in a clean mirror."***

(16)

A full-length mirror stands beside a granite wall. Light from the sun floods my body causing reflected light to fall equally on the wall and the mirror. I see myself only in the mirror.

The Self exists in all the objects of the world and all the objects of the world exist in and are perceived in the Self's Light yet we can't see It in them because, like the granite wall, they have no reflective power. Nor can It be seen in a mind cluttered with *vasana*-produced objects (thoughts, ideas, memories, feelings, emotions, perceptions, dreams, imaginations) for their flow produces a non-reflective moving screen that obscures Its shining. Bits of light may break through to provide a glimpse of the effulgent beauty radiating from within, but not enough to allow careful identification. A purified Subtle Body is a spotless reflective surface in which the Self can shine in all its glory, making accurate identification possible.

Cleaning the mind involves a change in one's approach to life. Training the ego to abandon its unholy preoccupation with results, dedicate its activities a higher altar, and see things happening "through it" empties the subconscious and creates a meditative state of mind. Loving God and all beings as one's own Self purifies extorting emotional negativities. Finally, the use of the intellect to discriminate between the Real and the unreal, the ego's and the Spirit's thought systems, reduces agitation to a minimum.⁴⁴

***The Self is the king of the being,
sitting on the inner throne,
distinct from the three bodies
and witness of their functions."***

(17)

⁴⁴ Meditation, The Science of the Self, Chapter 3 by the author discusses purification in detail.

The Self is one's true nature, the kingly state of being. The practice of discrimination introduces the discriminator to the Self, the king within, by merging the Subtle Body into the Self.⁴⁵ The Self is that purely spiritual part of one's being which watches the play of subjective and objective phenomena with complete detachment as the witnessing seer, shining from the "throne," the innermost core of the being, where the gross, subtle and causal bodies like courtly ministers, cluster around and pay homage.

*"The moon speeds across the sky
when clouds pass before it.
Seen through the senses and mind,
The Self appears dynamic."
(18)*

Gathered around the Self, the three bodies nestle close, drawing intelligence and vitality. Seen through the bodies the Self appears active, but is actually the motionless all-pervading field in which all activity takes place. It is effortless Being radiating the inexhaustible energy⁴⁶ that powers all bodies and worlds.

At the mystic stage of spiritual practice, for example, exotic experiences play before the mind's eye, creating the impression that the Self is dynamic but they are only projections of the Unconscious on the stationary screen of Consciousness. In the intensity, and excitement of the moment, the discriminator may imagine he or she is experiencing the Self. But the eternally shining circumferenceless Self does not change. **Not to be experienced, it is the ultimate experiencer.** To merge into and identify oneself with that ultimate Seer is Meditation, the culmination of discriminative meditation practice, an experienceless experience.

*"Just as all creatures
live in the light of the sun,
the body, mind, and intellect
carry on their activities*

⁴⁵ The Subtle Body is Consciousness disturbed by thought and feeling. When the thoughts are destroyed by the practice of discrimination the Subtle Body becomes indistinguishable from the Self. The destruction of thought does not necessarily mean that there are no thoughts in the mind as in *nirvikalpa samadhi* but that the thoughts are infrequent enough or light enough to allow Consciousness's illumination of the mind to be cognized (*savikalpa samadhi*) Or, that the discriminator's evaluation of the thoughts as unreal removes their power to agitate the mind.

⁴⁶ The energy of Consciousness is called *shakti*. It is both separate from and one with the Self.

in the light of the Self.”

(19)

Though making life possible the sun is unaffected by everything taking place on earth. The body, mind, and intellect and the worlds illumined by them are totally dependent on the Self, the radiant Being whose presence creates the illusion of sentiency in them. Like the sun, the Self is unaffected by the activities taking place in our minds.

*Owing to lack of discrimination we superimpose
bodily functions on the Self
just as the eyes superimpose blue
on the sky.*

(20)

Anyone sitting in a stationary train when one on an adjacent track pulled silently out of the station has experienced the illusion of movement. To say, "I am walking. I am talking. I am breathing," is actually untrue. The body, infused with vital life, acts. The Self, whose presence makes it all possible, simply observes.

Looking at the clear sky, we incorrectly perceive blue. Not seeing what we really are, we take what we do see to be what we are. "I am man, woman, mother, father, son, daughter, sister, brother, fat, black, white, gay, tired, angry, old, strong, intelligent, rich, poor, doctor, lawyer, happy, etc." are common statements applying to the body/mind/intellect/ego entity, but not to the Self.

*The moon seems to dance
because ripples disturb
the tranquil surface of a lake.
Similarly, ideas of action and enjoyment
are thought to be the Self's.*

(21)

In response to the everyday inquiry, "Hi, what's happening?" we eagerly launch into a litany of our most recent doings. "Well, yesterday I... and then I... after which I..." Every time we say or think "I," we are unaware of precisely who the "I" is, yet it is associated with everything we've ever said or done.

The ego, ignorant of its identity with the Self, alone and encircled by otherness, identifies with action and accomplishment which it sees as a means to complete itself. The Self, who sees no otherness, has nothing to gain through action because it is always complete.

The ego continually tries to enjoy life because it doesn't enjoy itself. The Self is a state of effortless enjoyment, devoid of subject and object. In it one is what one enjoys.

Ego's concept of doership and enjoyment, like all its subsidiary "i am's," condemns it to sporadic suffering. The practice of knowledge involves sorting out these inner "i's", acknowledging and recognizing them for the partial identities they are, until the experience of the "I" beyond them all begins to emerge.

An effective technique involves listening to one's speech and watching the mind, trying to keep track of the seemingly endless parade of not Self "i's" which, like ripples, continually distort the clear lake of Consciousness. Though these little "i's" may serve useful functions in the relative world, they are inessential parts of the Self.

***"Attachment, desire, pleasure and pain are
experienced as long as the Subtle Body
functions. In deep sleep they don't exist.
They belong to the mind, not the Self."***

(22)

Desire is painful. When I say I want something I'm simply saying I'm not happy as I am. Attachment is painful because it destroys freedom, the greatest pleasure. Pleasure is painful because of the fear of losing it and the inevitable craving for its return once it ends. And, obviously, pain is painful.

To be rid of the mind's contaminants realize you're not contaminated in the first place. If the mind is anxious, depressed or temporarily high on an object, so what? I'm not it. I'm the one who was there before the mind went into its change, the one who recorded the changes, and the one who continues when the changes cease. A dirty house doesn't necessarily mean the occupants are dirty. Feelings of impurity and self-disgust stem from incorrect identification of the Self with the mind. The more we refuse to participate in the negativities of the mind, the less the mind generates negativities. Not taking responsibility means not allowing oneself to develop an attitude about them, positive or negative. An attitude would be: they are "sinful," and therefore, by association, I'm sinful. Turning them into problems to be

rationalized or self-validating credentials is a further symptom of faulty Self-Knowledge. They belong to the mind, not to me.

***"The sun is light, fire hot
and sugar sweet. The Self is
Consciousness, Being,
Endless Bliss, and Purity."
(23)***

Consciousness, that because of which we know what we know, suffers no existential crises because it always knows who it is. Being is isness, fullness, non-numerical oneness, that because of which we exist. Bliss is limitlessness, total freedom. Purity, not opposed to impurity, is an immaculate wholeness that neither fears evil nor craves good.

Thousands of lifetimes of inner work will not transform an unconscious, non-existent, miserable, impure ego into the Self. The verse is suggesting that we stop trying to be better or different and realize who we are.

***"When Pure Awareness
blends with a thought wave in the Subtle Body
the experience of knowing is produced."
(24)***

Knowledge of objects takes place in the waking and dream states of consciousness. How does it happen? Programmed by a *samskara*, a thought or feeling arises. When the thought is illumined by Awareness, the experience of knowing occurs. Knowledge, its dead by-product, is of the content of the wave. For example, if anger is rising in the mind, one knows one is angry unless the Self's attention is elsewhere. Similarly, information coming in through the senses will create a mind wave but no knowledge unless the Self illumines it. After the blending of Awareness and the wave, the experience of knowing itself becomes a finer wave (memory) and passes out of waking consciousness to be stored as a "seed" in the subconscious. Owing to the dynamic nature of the subconscious the memory may be re-experienced when the seed sprouts, manifests in the Subtle Body, and is illumined by Awareness once again. If not it remains in an unmanifest condition.

If the mind is undisturbed by sense impressions or memory Awareness illumines no-thing (still a something) and nothing knowledge takes place, as in deep sleep. In *nirvikalpa samadhi*, a "super" conscious state without mental activity, It illumines Itself. Then only Knowingness or Pure Knowledge remains. This is the "forth" state of consciousness called Self-Realization or Enlightenment.⁴⁷

***The Self doesn't act.
Without the Self's light
the intellect doesn't know anything.
Only a deluded ego thinks
it perceives and knows.
(25)***

Just as a light bulb can't shine without electricity passing through it, the ego/intellect knows nothing without Awareness shining through it. And just as the light from the bulb is unaffected by the objects it illumines, the Self, which is very much a part of every experience, is unaffected by any thought or feeling. The ego is merely a dim projection in Awareness of an aggregate of subconscious tendencies reflected in the Subtle Body. It's extrovertedness makes it unable to realize (in so far as it's conscious) the Self, so it identifies by default with its instruments or limbs, the senses-mind-intellect, and imagines itself the ultimate perceiver and knower.

THE EGO CAN'T GET ENLIGHTENED⁴⁸

The Self is always enlightened. Contrary to popular belief, the ego can't "get enlightened,"⁴⁹ because its awareness, merely a reflection in Consciousness, is incapable of illumining the Self's subtler, purer, and brighter Light. It can, however, in so far as it is defined as a conscious being, acknowledge on a moment to moment basis the source of its being. An "inlightened" ego is free of the idea it sees and knows, an open channel

⁴⁷ In fact there is no "forth" state. The Self alone exists. However, with reference to the three apparent states (waking ,dream, and deep sleep) the Self is said to be 'the forth.'" Even referring to the Self as a "state" is misleading if one defines a state as something subject to change. The word "state" is useful in so far as it gives a picture of an impersonal formless reality but not useful in that it does not convey the idea of sentiency.

⁴⁸ I also present the view that it is precisely the ego that get's enlightned. Whether it does or doesn't depends on one's definition of enlightenment and ego. If the ego is other than the Self it can get enlightened. If it is the Self appearing as a separate entity, then the destruction of the ego concept is enlightenment.

⁴⁹ In the sense of actually perceive the Self. On the other hand, if anyone's to "get" enlightened it would have to be the ego since the Self is already enlightened.

through which the Enlightened Being sees and knows. Knowing it can't know, it wordlessly revels in the Light.⁵⁰

Enlightenment is knowing/experiencing oneself as the Self, Pure Awareness, not the ego believing in or "experiencing" the Self. Christ's non-dualistic pronouncement, "I and my Father are one," meant he was one with the spiritual Self, the "father," sire of the universe. The Pharisees, caught up in the quaint illusion that God the Father was an old man in the sky, couldn't connect their idea of God with the Self conscious vagabond before them - and the rest is history.

Enlightenment happens when the ego, like a salt doll dropped in the ocean, dissolves in Pure Awareness, an experience similar to waking up from a dream. One moment you're a dreamer and the next a waker. The dreamer has to disappear so the waker can come into being. The feeling of the awakened one is: "I am self-luminous Awareness. I shine on everything. I shine on the objects in the world and I shine on the waves in the mind of the person I once mistakenly thought I was. If that "me" is happy or sad what concern is it of mine? I merely illumine these changing conditions of mind. Not only do I shine on the former me, I shine in the minds of all beings as their innermost Self."

***"To mistake a rope for a snake causes intense fear.
Taking oneself to be the ego causes existential fear.
Self Realization destroys fear."***

(26)

. In the twilight a thirsty traveler approached a village well. Reaching down, she recoiled in fear when she saw a big snake coiled next to the bucket. Unable to move for fear of being bitten, she imagined terrible things, including her own death. At that time an old man coming to the well noticed her standing there petrified with fear.

"What's the problem?" he asked kindly.

"Snake! Snake! Get a stick before it strikes!" she whispered frantically.

The old man burst out laughing. "Hey!" he said, "Take it easy. That's no snake. It's the well rope. It just looks like a snake in the darkness."

Though she was never in danger, the misperceived rope produced intense fear. Our existential fears come from mistaking the Self for the dualistic universe. The fear of the snake arose simultaneously with the

⁵⁰ This wordless ego revelling is sometimes called meditation and sometimes enlightenment.

misperception of the rope. What happened to the snake and the fear when the woman perceived the rope? It vanished.

Because we are so identified with our misperceptions, we need to hear from an independent source, scripture or a teacher, that the snake is actually a rope. However, hearing the truth is insufficient without an investigation. When the woman heard that the rope was a snake she looked to make sure, and her fear disappeared in the light of knowledge.

Most fears are not legitimate physical fears. We fear love or the lack of it, life or death, success or failure - you name it. Myriad groundless fears arising from the cloud of unknowing disturb the mind not established in right knowledge. Rather than deal with a profusion of specific fears, the spiritual warrior lops off the root fear (taking oneself to be the ego) with the sword of discrimination. Such a person, having discovered identity with the Self, is incapable of fear.

Actually, fearlessness is a negative way of describing Self-Realization. The Self is the Love that generates the cosmic harmony we call life, a harmony that exists because, like the snake, the universe is one with the Self. Can the illusory snake exist without the rope's support? Enlightenment is the experience, I am that Reality, not this limited ego

***"Just as a lamp illumines objects in a room,
the Self illumines the mind, which is composed
of inert subtle matter and unable
to illumine itself".***

(27)

Someone who says, "I'm a rock," is either joking or crazy. But nearly everyone identifies with the gross and subtle bodies to some degree, an identification causing pleasure and pain. We think of the mind as living, but it's only a mechanical collection of subtle material waves (memories, sensations, emotions, feelings, tendencies) in Consciousness. Having no light of its own, unaware of its own existence, it merely bounces Consciousness onto objects like a mirror.

If the mind contains the happy/sad wave it is common to think "I am happy/sad." But in fact, "I" is never happy or sad. In this case the Self is apparently confused, identifying with the mind wave, thereby suffering happiness/sadness until the wave returns to the Unconscious. To free the Self this confusion must be removed.

Of course the idea of a deluded Self is ridiculous, a cosmic joke, because the Self is always free of the mind and its content. For this reason, spiritual ignorance, is defined as that which is not. Self-Knowledge is not obtaining something you don't already have (to claim that you don't have a Self is to claim that you don't exist), but the rediscovery of something always with you by removing a confusion that isn't actually there!

***One lamp is not needed
to illumine the light of another.
A second awareness is not needed
to know the Self, Pure Awareness.
(28)***

The sun illumines everything in the world. To see it, no second sun's light is necessary. When someone claims to know the Self⁵¹ we are immediately skeptical, if not downright incredulous. It's possible to know of the Self because It's fame is considerable, but It can't be known with the intellect in the way a fact or a person is known. Using a flashlight to see the sun is analogous to trying to know the Self with the mind. The intellect, like a telescope, is an instrument capable of illumining objects in a field but incapable of seeing itself, much less the Self, its origin.

In so far as it's a reality, the universe is Awareness or Consciousness arranged in several planes from gross to subtle: the outer layer, the material world is so dense it doesn't even appear as Awareness; the senses, subtler than the body and marginally less opaque, enjoy a little sentiency borrowed from the Subtle Body; the Subtle Body, because it's made of chitta,⁵² a form of Consciousness, and subject to the *gunas*⁵³ is still subtler; and behind the Subtle Body, at the innermost core, all-pervasive pure Awareness enlightens the Subtle Body. No subtler awareness illumines It.

In order to "know" the unknowable Self the intellect must be switched off or transcended - the idea behind discriminative meditation practice. When the mind is brought to stillness, (it need not remain that way more than a few moments) an awakening may occur during which the Self reveals itself.

After waking up in the morning, I needn't inquire of my wife if I'm awake. Similarly, Enlightenment is self-validating. "I and my Father are one" is the statement of a Self-aware being. Those who haven't experienced

⁵¹ Or God. God is a personification of the Self according to Vedanta.

⁵² A Sanskrit term from the Yoga philosophy meaning "mind-stuff."

⁵³ Energies of Consciousness that color the Subtle Body. See Chapter 3 of Meditation, The Science of the Self.

the awakened state make a big fuss when someone talks like this, because from the human state, nothing is self-contained, secure or self-validating.

***"Negating the conditionings
with the knowledge "I am not this"
realize your Self identity
as indicated in scripture."⁵⁴
(29)***

The ego can neither deny itself nor assume the transcendental position without undergoing a spiritual transformation. Spirituality is not self-improvement, but the egoless growth of the outer self triggered by the awakened Self within. Having "seen the light," we should allow ourselves to enthusiastically participate in the unfolding of the Self in our lives, a sometimes painful and drawn-out process involving unlearning and disassociating from incorrect self-ideas and images.

How consistently we indulge our emotions, looking for pleasure and reaping pain, yet fail to discover we're not our feelings. Even in old age when separation should have occurred, failure to see the body, mind, and intellect as insentient vehicles is commonplace. Passing through life without learning that one is not one's equipment, how will a few verbal denials change facts? Fortunately life seems to be designed to disillusion until the clinging stops.

***"The three bodies are perceived objects,
as perishable as bubbles.
Realize with pure discrimination,
I am not them.
I am limitless non-dual pure Awareness."
(30)***

Experience takes place when the ego, motivated by the Unconscious uses the Gross and Subtle Bodies to contact or avoid contact with objects in their respective fields. In spite of the unhappy fact that the bodies and their objects are in constant flux, it has somehow been led to believe that hooking the bodies up to objects will bring happiness. Based on such an unstable foundation, is it any wonder life is so inherently insecure and frustrating?

⁵⁴ Scripture refers to the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras.

Since ultimately all transactions, even the good, are perishable one might be tempted to despair - yet there is a way out: cut loose expectations of security and permanence and take what comes for what it is; experience the changes without clinging, and understand that non-attachment frees the mind to seek the Self's lasting bliss. Though courage and honesty are required, living in the now is infinitely more satisfying than living with expectations. Once this fact sinks in, one takes the obvious imperfections of time-bound life as an attractive advertisement for Self-Knowledge.

The second reason for discriminating away the belief in the body, mind, and intellect as self is more subtle - because they are "perceived objects." That physical objects are perceived is easy to grasp. Nor does it take a genius to see that ideas and emotions also perceived objects. This verse takes us a step deeper, informing us that the three bodies themselves are perceived objects.

What does this mean? When we think, we see the thought. But why don't we see the thinker seen with the same clarity? Because, we think we are the thinker. The verse says the intellect (the thinker), the mind (the feeler/emoter), and the physical body (sense organs) are perceived objects. Who perceives them? The Self.

This teaching is based on a simple fact - **one cannot be what one perceives.**⁵⁵ For example, you see your hand. Are you the hand? The hand is just insentient meat. Identifying with the body, the hand seems to be you, but actually you are the perceiver. Common sense tells us that the perceiver cannot be the perceived. Applying this simple principle to every part of your being (mind, intellect, ego, and Unconscious) see that you are none of it.

Though discrimination is usually not an issue during periods of happiness, a serious seeker should continue to inquire "**Who's** happy. If the one feeling wonderful at the moment wasn't previously feeling so good, the ego, an object of perception, has been identified. Not only will the inquiry identify the Self by default but it will remove the expectation that the happiness will last, since the ego is known to constantly change.

Discriminating the Self (the ultimate subject) from the not-Self (the bodies and their objects) is difficult because conditioning has inextricably bound us to "perceived objects," subtle and gross. **The text is not suggesting the ego be weaned from its attachments, although that never**

⁵⁵ That this truth is contradicted by a more profound truth (that the perceiver and the perceived are one) is caused by the fact that the former is intended to help the discriminator out of Maya (the world) where the laws of duality are at work. When the discrimination is successful and the Self realized, no separation exists in the mind between the perceiver and the perceived, although they are physically perceived as separate.

hurts, but the Self be discriminated from the ego, i.e. that the ego be seen as a “perceived object.” An ascetic ego is not the equivalent of the Self. The Self is the perceiver of the ego and its attachments - or lack thereof.

The verse suggests an already-accomplished separation of one's Self from everything - which may seem a cold uncaring state. However, seeing the world through the Self's non-attached eyes reveals It's loving connection to every atom of the universe.⁵⁶

***"Because I am other than the body, I don't suffer its changes.
I am not born nor do I die. I have no sense organs
so I am not involved in the world.***

***Because I am other than the mind,
I am free from sorrow, attachment, malice, and fear.
Scripture says I am pure, without thought and desire,
and so I am.***

***I have no attributes. I live without breathing
I am eternal, formless, and ever-free.
I am the same in all and fill all things with Being.
I am limitless non-dual Pure Awareness."***
(31-35)

A remarkable description of the Self meant for use in discrimination /meditation.

***“The impression "I am the Self" created by constant
practice destroys ignorance and agitation
just as medicine destroys disease."***
(36)

Very few public proclamations are in such bad taste and received with as much contempt as the statement "I am God!"⁵⁷ Christ, as is well-known, paid dearly for it. Yet, in so far as each of us is unrealized God, nothing makes more sense as a spiritual practice than consistent private affirmation of our divinity.

⁵⁶ The ego's connection is motivated by fear and desire.

⁵⁷ God is considered by Vedanta to be a personification of the nameless formless Self for the purposes of worship.

Nearly everyone has, at moments of great object happiness or intense tragedy, broken through the ego plane to realize⁵⁸ the Self, an experience which makes a deep and lasting subconscious impression. Discriminative meditation is the art of experiencing the Self consciously, so it's possible, if one discriminates successfully, to favorably program the Unconscious with Self realization *vasanas* until they nudge out worldly *vasanas*, at which point the Unconscious begins to "know" us as God.

Though seemingly farfetched, the idea is psychologically sound. Anyone trying to break a nasty habit knows how unreliable resolutions are in the face of subconscious resistance. Say, "I'm quitting!" and you'll eat your words. The Unconscious knows you can't just quit, because the impressions associated with the habit are etched too deeply. But if a positive habit is patiently developed, its impressions will eventually crowd out the negative.

The thought "I am incomplete, limited, and inadequate" is a Subtle Body disease for which the proper medicine is the experience of the inner Self. Taking one's medicine consistently over time, the mind begins to harmonize with the Source. Eventually only one "Self" thought remains in the conscious and unconscious minds. Then, in a miraculous way the Divine Idea transforms into the continuous effortless experience of the Self. When Self experience becomes permanent, the knowledge "I am limitless actionless Awareness" destroys the ignorance "I am an incomplete, limited, inadequate being."

***"Sit in a solitary place control the senses,
free the mind of desire, and meditate with unswerving attention
on the Self, one without a second."***

(37)

Before we can successfully practice discriminative meditation we need a meditation-worthy Subtle Body, the instrument of meditation. And before we can create a meditation-worthy Subtle Body we need a comprehensive knowledge of how the Subtle Body, sandwiched between the Gross and Causal Bodies, works.

EXTROVERSION OF MIND⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Realization of the Self means experience, not just knowledge "of" the Self.

⁵⁹ The Subtle Body

No matter how obviously separate objects seem, careful investigation reveals that nothing comes into and passes out of existence without the help of something else; that is not a transformation of something else. The body, for example, is actually an aggregate of common elements drawn from various sources, a shifting sand bar across which the elemental ocean ebbs and flows, its constituents changing from moment to moment. Where does it begin and the world end? The barriers separating the mind from the body, the emotions from the mind, the ego from the Self, the body from other bodies and the elements are purely fictional, erected by fearful minds in a futile attempt to impose order and gain control of a changing universe governed by an unseen, and therefore suspect, Intelligence.

The average mind finds itself separate and alone confronting a vast existence which, for all it knows, seems, at least at times, a pointless and meaningless chaos. Science assures us that we're seeing an orderly organic universe evolving according to a vast cosmic plan, religion that our purposeful world manifested from the mind of a just and disciplined Divinity. Are these far-fetched views or a sensible description of reality?

In spite of the confusion and apparent disorder things do seem to work out over time. Unseen laws of cause and effect allow us to venture forth with reasonable expectations of finding what we seek. Scientists aim probes at empty destinations which years later intersect planets millions of miles away at the time of launching. Water is never dry nor sugar sour. The sun goes up and comes down with frightening regularity. Because we can count on everything to follow its nature, we can search for happiness. How strange it would be to come here with five fully functioning knowledge-gathering senses only to discover that a perverse Creator had neglected to provide sense stimuli. What a frustration to be the proud possessor of an intellect in a world bereft of ideas or a heart in a world without feelings.

Most of us are so busy chasing the things we want and avoiding what we don't, we haven't time to strip ourselves down to basics to see how skillfully we're put together, how neatly we dovetail into the universe. Rather than sitting down and asking why we are the way we are, day in and day out we mindlessly push on down life's tracks, a locomotive with a full head of steam right on schedule - looking neither left nor right. To us life is simply one long experience broken into many small experiences. Information comes in from the world around and we react. Stimulus. Response. Stimulus. Response. After a seemingly endless procession of experiences the lights go out and we die.

The complex process of experience is so instinctive, subtle, and fleeting, most of us don't even realize it's going on. To find out why it's so difficult to re-discover the Self, meditation's goal, the experienceless experience that frees one from life's treadmill, let's make an examination, not of the ordinary experiences that bulk up our lives or the peak experiences that give flavor, but the **way** we experience.

Let's take a trivial event - a drive to the supermarket - and see what's really going on. First, before we've even suited up for life's ball game we need a playing field. No material universe equals no supermarket, no automobile, no roads. So what is this universe that makes cars, supermarkets, and a plethora of gadgets possible? According to Vedantic model, which may seem slightly crude to our modern minds but is nonetheless worthy of consideration, immaterial Consciousness evolved five material elements.

How the object of meditation, the eternally self-existing, indivisible, non-dual Awareness has managed to transform into primordial matter and intelligently divide into five elements which in turn split and combine with each other in a creative orgy that gives birth to the unbelievable diversity of names and forms confronting our senses is difficult to fathom. Perhaps it's similar to the creation of a web by a spider. The spider miraculously brings forth a substance from its body to shape a web according to its own idea. Is the cosmos, as Vedanta claims, simply the Self masquerading as matter?

We can never factually verify the brass tacks reality of any model, because spiritual models are meant, not to rivet clever concepts into our intellects concerning the precise nature of a given physical or psychological object or process, but to get the mind to think radically about the non-conceptual Self behind everything - including our own experience. When meditation brings the Self into clear view, It's relationship with the universe becomes clear. Over the centuries the following model has provided a reasonable explanation of the relationship between the senses and the elements, one helpful in understanding the role of the senses and mind in meditation.

If we analyze our automobile, for example, we find all five elements represented. It occupies space and is made up of space. The majority of its parts are composed of the earth element: iron, chromium, aluminum, etc. It breathes air which feeds the fire burning in its innards which is in turn cooled by water. The body sitting in the driver's seat, a breathing moving soul-vehicle, is also composed of the same elements.

Space isn't tangibly elemental like the other four but exists as a framework or support for the other elements. In the Self, our spiritual

essence, the object of meditation, there is no space. The evolution of the cosmos requires a subtle material medium and "space" is it, according to this theory.⁶⁰

Before the cosmos began there was only Consciousness, the Self - infinite, eternal Being. Then, for whatever reason, space, the invisible substance that pervades the whole creation, emerged from the womb of the Infinite. After which, space split to make the air element and, having divided itself and recombined with a part of the space element, made the fire element which went through the same procedure to become water which, repeating the process once more, becomes the earth element.

Although matter ultimately evolves from Spirit, it passes through an intermediate or subtle state. The material elements are said to derive from the subtle elements, but where do the subtle elements come from? To find the answer we have to back up a bit more and dig around in the macrocosmic mind. Just as a mighty oak potentially exists in a tiny acorn, the universe potentially exists in an invisible or unmanifest "seed" condition in the macrocosmic mind, the finest level of existence, comprised of three primary energies. When these energies,⁶¹ light (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*), are undifferentiated there is no cosmos, a condition or state of perfect potential energy. When disturbed, for whatever reason, the subtle and gross elements come into being and unfold the universe.⁶²

Subtle elements make up mind,⁶³ an interface between Pure Consciousness and the material world. They are fine energetic abstractions of the material elements that sustain themselves in Consciousness with the help of Chitta, an extremely subtle form of Consciousness that stores the footprints of mind and matter as they evolve the universe. You can glimpse them in the human personality which might be fiery (passionate), airy (intellectual), earthy (practical), or watery (emotional) or any permutation or combination thereof.

An inquiring mind might ask how, if Consciousness is unchanging, It changes to become the universe, and the answer, in the last metaphysical digression before we return to our analysis of experience, is that it can and it

⁶⁰ The idea of the grossification of the elements is taken by Vedanta from Samkhya, an early "science" of consciousness.

⁶¹ This idea, which has found its way into Vedanta, Yoga, and Bhakti comes from Samkhya one of Vedic cultures oldest and most scientific philosophies.

⁶² This may be the first formulation of the "Big Bang" theory of evolution.

⁶³ The Subtle Body

can't. The creative process is, according the non-dual school,⁶⁴ not so much an actual physical reality, but a superimposition by a spiritually unaware mind of change on the Changeless. But once we buy into the idea that the superimposed reality is real, analysis shows that the changes can be described with accuracy because they consistently follow certain predictable universal laws.

The creation is elemental, a complex and wondrous working out of gross and subtle material energies in Consciousness. How does that affect meditation?

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MEDITATION

The story of the psychology of meditation begins with the arising of the senses out of the elements. (*Note the upward moving arrows arising out of the elements in the upper left corner of the fig. 1 below.*) Our story line has the Self projecting the macrocosmic mind, the forces of light, activity, and inertia activated, (*the SRT characters in the "V" section of diagram 1.*) and the subtle elements, in an orgy of creative energy, mixing and recombining to produce the material world. One day, when the mix is just right, the first sense organ sticks its tiny eye out of the cosmic soup and peers around.

The five elements have five corresponding properties which give rise to the five perceptive senses. For example, the property of space is sound. The Self, Pure Consciousness accurately referred to as the "unstruck sound" is spaceless and therefore soundless. Matter, because it is dualistic, constantly vibrates. Excessive imagination is not required to see that if you have an ocean of matter, energy in motion, eternally vibrating in space which, in turn is superimposed on a limitless ocean of Consciousness, one day, after perhaps trillions of years, the rudimentary forerunner of two ears will evolve. Somehow Intelligence is going to develop the power to hear itself in matter - and so on with the other elements and senses.

Vedanta says that the properties of the five gross elements - hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling - which make it possible to know the elements, evolve from the light or *sattvic* aspect of the gross elements because knowledge requires both physical and psychic light. The organs are not the physical instruments but subtle psychic centers in the Subtle Body

⁶⁴ Advaita Vedanta, based on the teachings of Shankaracharya, the author of this text, in the Eighth or Ninth Century AD.

VEDIC MODEL OF THE THREE BODIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE SELF

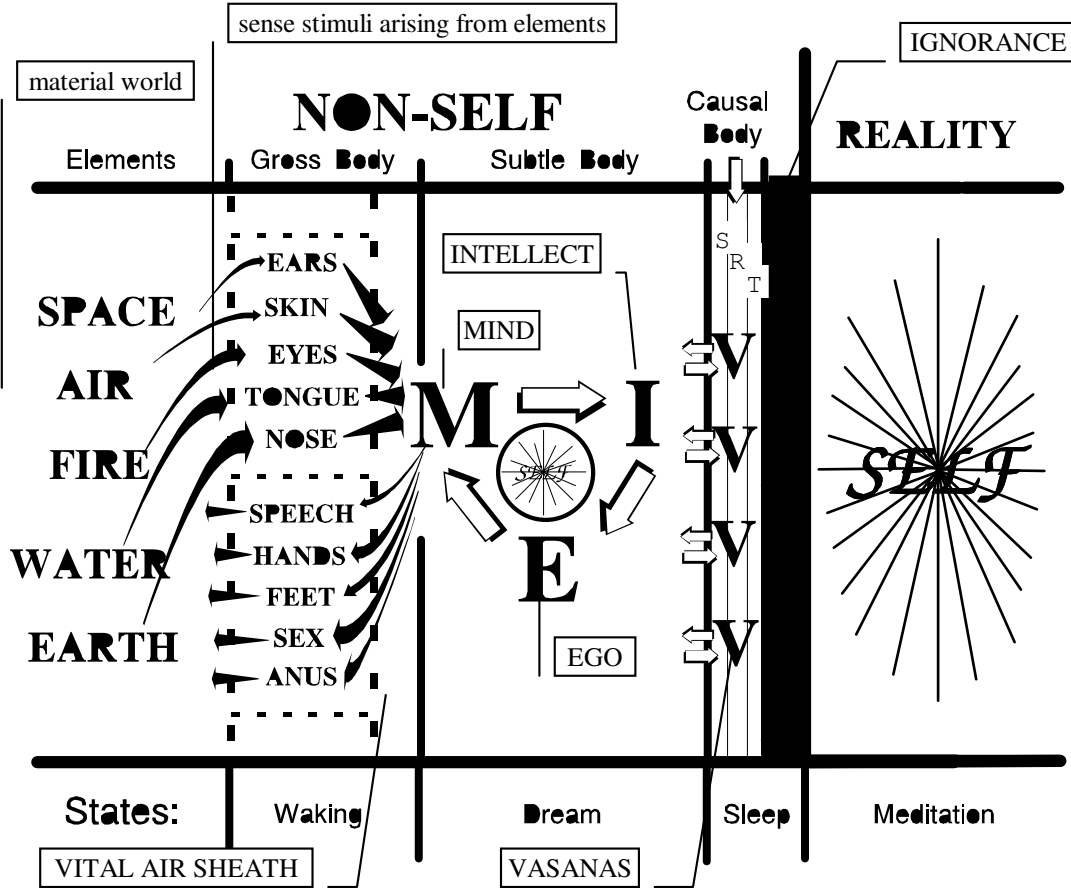


fig. 1

which are capable of perceiving through physical instruments. It is said that air, whose property is touch, creates skin; fire, whose property is heat/light generates form which makes eyes possible; water, the medium of taste, evolves the tongue, and earth, a mixture of all the preceding elements gives off smell which is ultimately responsible for the fact that a nose protrudes from the front of our faces. However it comes about, and you may have your own theory, the inescapable fact is: the senses are somehow intimately connected with the five material building blocks.

Enter the marvelous Mind. Sounds, sights, tastes, touches, and smells, myriad sense stimuli constantly pouring in through five channels are

beautifully mixed by the Mind (*see "M" in the Subtle Body section of the diagram*) to form one cogent perception!

So the basis of experience is the contact of the senses with the objects, symbolized by the five element model. Let's get away from the world hidden behind the senses for a moment and consider an everyday situation. On the way to the supermarket a car ran a stop sign and came hurtling at me. I screamed, slammed on the breaks, and swerved the wheel, narrowly avoiding an accident. Though it was the first time such a thing happened, why did I react so swiftly and appropriately?

A speeding object emits stimuli which strike on the retina causing the mind sends a signal to three of the five active organs (hands, feet, and speech) and the accident is avoided. In fact the mind's command to the senses was the final step in an instinctual process going on at an even deeper level.⁶⁵ How did the mind know what to do?

When a situation requiring a response or non-response develops, the mind passes the information upstairs to the intellect for a determination. (*Note the right-moving arrow between "M" and "I".*) To make an informed decision intellect has to access the sub and Unconscious minds where the *vasanas* of previous personal and collective experience are stored and available on request. (*The arrows to the right of "I".*) Like software accessing a hard drive, Intellect first checks the personal subconscious for relevant experience. The *vasanas*, more than passive mental pictures, are the dynamic residue of experience, the essential link in the stimulus response chain. If a similar situation had not occurred at some time in the past there would be no information on record and the intellect couldn't make a timely determination. In the event that no similar personal experiences are available the collective mind, the Unconscious, or "instinct" is accessed. When the stimulus in question is matched with the appropriate response the intellect determines that a reaction is in order, sends the information on to the ego, the boss of the inner world, (*arrow moving down from "I" to "E".*) who commands the mind (*arrow moving upward to "M".*) to activate (*five descending left-moving arrows*) the senses. The mind amplifies the subconscious fear impression to insure a swift reaction. This stimulus-response chain takes a fraction of a second and is the essence of sense-motivated experience.

It may or may not be exactly like this because models are never exactly the reality they purport to represent, but the idea deserves consideration.

⁶⁵ Mind in this context is an executive agent, an e-moter.

Apart from the nuts and bolts working of the mechanism one fact stands out: in addition to the material level at least two other hidden layers of our being intimately factor into our response to life: the subtle and the causal.

If, as the science of Self-Knowledge⁶⁶ contends, there is a forth level,⁶⁷ the Self, hidden within the subtle and behind the causal, how does it fit into the stimulus response chain? Answer: it doesn't, at least not directly. Why? Because the stimulus-response mechanism fixes our attention firmly in material reality. **Extroversion is the most salient feature of waking state consciousness and the primary reason the Self, the only permanent source of fulfillment, is effectively walled off from experience.** This is not to say that the Self, the essence of our being, is uninvolved. Just as the sun makes all earthly activity possible but does not directly participate in any activity, the Self simply provides the consciousness-energy that makes the body-mind-sense complex dynamic. How it functions is up to the embodied being and its *vasanas*.

The senses, turned toward the elemental world, are not the only means of knowledge and experience. Through coordinating sense impressions and executing commands issuing from deeper layers of the psyche, the Mind, first limb of the Subtle Body, has evolved a world of its own. In its passive aspect Mind, often called the "heart,"⁶⁸ tunes into or reads feelings and emotions (*Arrow between "M" and "E" in upper left.*) while simultaneously projecting a wide array of positive and negative feelings: anger, jealousy, possessiveness, kindness, love, sympathy, affection, etc. And like the senses, nervously fixated on the material world, the mind is obsessively riveted on the emotional world, constantly on guard against a negative impulse from a hostile mind, alert to tender sympathies from kindred hearts. So concerned with safely navigating the peaks and troughs of its windy emotional sea, it fails to appreciate the extraordinary fact that it's sailing on an ocean of pure Love.⁶⁹

Intellect, the second limb of the Subtle Body, thinks and chooses. The teachings of Vedanta have evolved as a result of the spiritual needs of intellectually developed beings. Because it is a little subtler than the mind, a bit closer to the Self, the source of its intelligence, it can become a powerful aid in the search for fulfillment just as the mind, purified of negativities, may become a channel for pure love and a powerful motivator for growth.

⁶⁶ Brahma Vidya, the Science of or Way to the Infinite, commonly called Vedanta.

⁶⁷ There is actually no forth level. The Self alone exists. Yet it seems a "forth" with reference to It's three bodies.

⁶⁸ This is not the same as the *hridaya*, the spiritual "Heart" or Self.

⁶⁹ The Self.

(Intellect's preoccupation with the thought and idea world is symbolized by the arrow pointing from "I" to "T.")

Ego, the third member of the inner triumvirate, is the will or individuality, the "I concept" through which the Self functions. Unaware of its identity with the Self, it becomes egoistic, believing itself separate from the world, from others, and from the Self. The belief in a separate self is nothing more than ego identifying with an accumulation of tendencies and memories patched together to counteract the fear of its own non-existence. Its belief in the reality of a solid objective material world is a perverse attempt to compensate for a deep insecurity in the face of the unstructured oceanic reality of existence. Ego's concerns - action and enjoyment, getting and keeping, and a host of others - stem directly from a lack of Self knowledge.⁷⁰

When the Subtle Body⁷¹ or conscious mind does not know that it is whole and complete Consciousness it takes the things and beings in the material world to be reality. Because it feels incomplete it desires objects and activities that it believes will complete it. **Desire, coupled with the natural extroversion of the Subtle Body necessitated by the demands of the Gross Body, produces a completely extroverted instrument of meditation.**⁷² Is it any wonder the instructions in the verse to sit in a solitary place, free the mind from desires, control the senses, and meditate with unswerving attention on the Self, seems like rocket science? **Successful meditation presupposes inner purity and an introverted Subtle Body.**⁷³

If the Causal Body has been insufficiently emptied, transcendence will not occur and meditation will simply involve working through emotional and intellectual issues. Attempting meditation without a purification life-style - sitting quietly in an out-of-the-way place thinking of God or working with the breath- may result in temporary peace of mind but not in consistent experience of the Self.

PURIFICATION

⁷⁰ The three limbs of the Subtle Body are not actually independent entities, though they often seem so, but different functions of the Subtle Body which is actually the Self.

⁷¹ Often called the "soul."

⁷² A comprehensive discussion of the phenomenon of Subtle Body extroversion can be found in Chapter 2 of "Meditation, The Science of the Self" by the author.

⁷³ The fear that an introverted Subtle Body will be a hindrance in accomplishing worldly tasks is unfounded. If the Subtle Body is purified by the methods listed below it becomes more inwardly and externally aware.

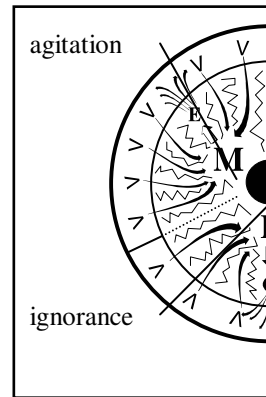
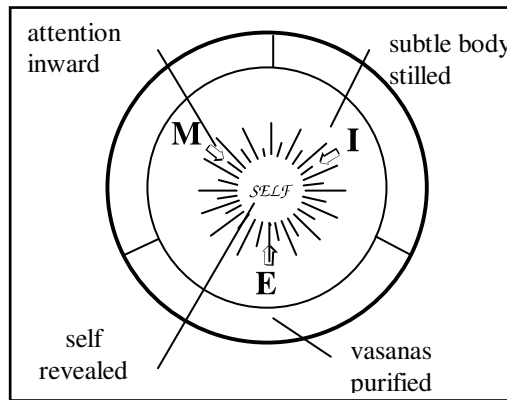
Therefore a program of purification must accompany attempts to meditate. "Pure" means uncontaminated. Theoretically substances can be purified, but in practice nothing in nature, the non-Self, exists in a pure state; the three bodies, for example, are elemental aggregates. The Causal Body, the meditator's primary obstacle, is part of macrocosmic nature and can never be completely purified. Through diligent practice, however, it can be cleansed to the point where meditation is spontaneous and deep. A purified Causal Body is relatively free of projecting and veiling energies, about which more will be said presently.

The Subtle Body can be purified directly or indirectly. Direct purifications are peak experiences and epiphanies during which the mind is lifted up and put in contact with the Self, the State of Meditation, by the application of a spiritual or religious technique, the presence of a spiritually powerful person, the Grace of God, and unknown causes, positive and negative. A great flood of spiritual energy, *shakti*,⁷⁴ flows like a powerful river into the Causal Body spontaneously purging *vasana*-generated thought and emotion, leaving the Subtle Body still and clear, a perfect surface in which to identify the Self as It reflects on it like an image in a mirror. Usually unsolicited and the source of great inspiration and faith, like everything in time, epiphanies eventually wear off because unhelpful *vasanas* extort the mind again.

Indirect purification, the long-range view, aims to purify the mind by consciously changing or removing *samskaras*, as illustrated below. Unhelpful *vasanas* dominate the mind pictured on the left completely extorting the attention factor and creating such a disturbance that the Self is obscured. (*note the small white arrows pointing toward "O," "E," and "T," Objects, Emotions, and Thoughts*) In the mind represented on the right unhelpful programming has been largely exhausted (*note the absence of "v's" in the outer ring, the Causal Body*) causing the centers turn inward, (*the small white arrows pointing toward the Self*) giving them a relatively constant perception of the Self.

Programming, the *vasanas*, can be helpful or unhelpful. The type of programming is determined by the attitude obtaining when the action that produced the *vasana* was performed. *Vasanas* are helpful when they produce

⁷⁴ The energy of Consciousness responsible for creating the universe.



ffgg43

harmonious thought and feeling states, unhelpful when they agitate the Subtle Body, extrovert the attention, and challenge concentration on subtle objects. Unhelpful *vasanas* are produced by the performance of activities, including thought and feelings, from spiritually unaware states of mind.

Because I don't know I'm an already peaceful, pleasurable being, i.e. the Self, I try to get peace and pleasure from a cigarette. Though short-term pleasure may be experienced⁷⁵ the practice is counterproductive because the meditator ends up concentrating on the body, reinforcing identification with it, and producing a dull state of mind. Smokers can usually meditate only after smoking, when the desire is temporarily submerged. Were a meditative state achieved by a smoker it would undoubtedly disappear with the next craving. The systematic destruction of the body causes increasing mental and emotional agitation, further reducing Self/self awareness.

Actions motivated by selfishness and excessive concern for results produce unhelpful *vasanas*. For example, unaware that love is my nature, I crave it through others, and uncomfortably saddle myself with an agitated emotion-dominated mind.⁷⁶

Fear-motivated actions produce negative *vasanas*. Worry about the body, health, money, gain or loss distracts the mind until it loses the power to enjoy to such an extent that worldly pleasures no longer satisfy it, let alone the bliss of meditation.

⁷⁵ See "Removing the Wall" on page 4.

⁷⁶ See the discussion in Chapter 4 of Meditation, The Science of the Self, "A Daunting List").

Desire-prompted activities produce unhelpful *vasanas*. Greed, pride, lust, deceit...religion's seven deadly sins...extrovert and stir the mind making it unfit for meditation.

WHAT TO DO?

Consuming and enjoying *x* produces an attraction *vasana* for *x*. Consuming and not enjoying produces an aversion *vasana* for *x*.⁷⁷ Without an action, subtle and/or gross, a *vasana* will not be produced.⁷⁸ When experience takes place and the mind is free of attraction and aversion no *vasanas* are produced. If *x* is not consumed when the *vasana* for it explodes in the Subtle Body, **it does not recycle but is removed from the Causal Body**, assuming it is acknowledged, not reinforced by longing, or repressed. Repressed desires come back. Therefore, it is possible to add, change, or delete *vasanas*.

A person developed colon cancer and needed an operation. The doctor cut the abdomen to remove the cancer and caused the patient's death. Though the operation was unsuccessful, the doctor was lauded for a noble attempt to save a life. Another man walking down a dark alley after the bars closed was accosted by a mugger who thrust a knife in his abdomen, killing him instantly. The robber was vilified and sent to prison for life. In both cases the cause of death was the same, a knife to the gut, but the killers suffered quite different fates. Were the action itself inherently evil the doctor would be doing time; were it inherently good the mugger would have gone scot-free. Actions in themselves are neither spiritual nor unspiritual, helpful or unhelpful, good or bad. **If the motivating attitude is the critical ingredient in the production of helpful or unhelpful *vasanas*, it stands to reason that changing the nature of the motivation will have an effect on the *vasana*.**

CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE

To change our attitudes we have to cultivate mindfulness. Mindfulness or self-awareness is constantly compromised because the *vasanas* extrovert the attention factor. Mindfulness is paying attention to and identifying

⁷⁷ "Consumption" represents any desire-prompted activity.

⁷⁸ A subtle action is a thought or feeling.

attitudes, especially those which ego prefers to keep in the dark.⁷⁹ Altering behavior without changing the underlying attitude does not result in purification and spiritual growth. The action *vasanas* may be obliterated but not the attitude *vasanas*, resulting in an agitated Subtle Body. An alcoholic who quits drinking but retains the psychology of drunk is a case in point.

Attitudes can be binding or non-binding. Binding attitudes⁸⁰ produce extroverting *vasanas* and mitigate against meditation. The following attitudes enhance agitating *samskaras*: fear, desire, attachment, pain, guilt, dishonesty, obsession, compulsion, pride, vanity, envy, jealousy, anger, fantasy, delusion, depression, selfishness, concern for results, and others.

A non-binding attitude produces a non-binding *vasana* and/or exhausts an existing *vasana*. Non-binding attitudes are: selflessness, compassion (object-motivated love), forgiveness, acceptance, indifference, dispassion, and joy. Non-binding attitudes are called *yogas*,⁸¹ states of mind that neutralize likes and dislikes, purify the Causal Body and make the Subtle Body meditation-worthy.

Spiritual practice is Subtle Body work, attitude adjustment. The three *yogas* purify the three inner centers: action *yoga* purifies Ego, love *yoga* purifies Mind, and knowledge *yoga* purifies Intellect.⁸² A purified Subtle Body displays stable geometry, like an isosceles triangle. No longer under intense pressure from unhelpful *vasanas*, its centers turn inward, fuse together, and meditate naturally on the Self. When the Causal Body has been purified and anxiety for results abandoned, the mind rests comfortably and joyfully in the present, taking what comes with equanimity. The three centers respect each other's turf and cooperate to present a unified front to a changing and uncertain world. In a purified Subtle Body, Intellect, schooled in the science of the Self, cheerfully presents a dispassionate and discriminating view to both Ego and Mind whose clarity is regularly compromised by excessive passion and emotion. Refusing to unduly push a personal agenda, it counsels a balanced response in all situations and, in highly-evolved persons, turns its formidable power of observation on itself,

⁷⁹ Unexamined unconscious attitudes keep ego in business. The ego often has a vested interest in maintaining negative *vasanas* even though they are the source of suffering. For example, individuals with bad habits, like drug or alcohol abuse, often cling to the habits long past the time when they produce pleasure because the attitude associated with the habit brings perverse pleasure - like the "poor me" or "victim" mentality - eliciting enough sympathy to partially counteract the suffering caused by the addiction itself.

⁸⁰ Addictions and compulsions are extreme examples.

⁸¹ In the context of this discussion "yoga" means technique.

⁸² The three "inner centers" are not actually distinct entities but interconnected functions of the Subtle Body. And the three "yogas" are not wholly independent therapies but interconnected attitudes. The "yogas" actually help to break down the artificial barriers between the parts of the inner self, the Subtle Body.

ferreting out poorly-conceived plans, incorrect analyses, and emotion-dominated conclusions.

In the best of all possible inner worlds, Mind, ordinarily handmaiden to a needy and selfish Ego, resists egoic desires, loves purely and faithfully, and refuses to disturb Subtle Body equilibrium with petty conceits, insecurities, and ill-conceived inflations - all the while offering support to Intellect's well-thought-out *sadhanas*⁸³. A well-balanced, satisfied emotional self is an essential condition of Self realization.

The tendency to operate exclusively from the emotional center is not conducive to Subtle Body harmony, and causes much suffering. Because unhealthy emotions are the result of incorrect views about oneself and reality, during initial phases of unrestrained ego-motivated devotion, the meditator should take extra pains to develop discrimination and dispassion.

The third limb of a purified Subtle Body, Ego, often considered the villain in the piece, should be strong and confident, not necessarily because it has successfully negotiated life, but because it has the courage to follow its spiritual inclinations. Ideally Ego strength should come from the realization that happiness comes through serving a noble ideal, Self realization, for example. A mature ego, mindful of its dependence on subjective and objective factors, will carefully heed Intellect's counsel, respect Mind's feelings and intuitions, and refuse to play inner politics, promoting harmony and inner unity.

THE PATH OF ACTION

The ego is that part in each of us that has split from the Self and set up business on its own. A product of Self ignorance, bedeviled by an unappeasable emptiness, it is a synonym for desire, the fear-driven power thought to correct the (unconscious) separation from the Self. Desire implies action, and the ego is a doer, eager to act on the belief that the joy is in the object.⁸⁴

ACTIONS HAVE RESULTS

Prudent individuals consider the consequences of their actions because every action or non-action performed in the field of Consciousness produces

⁸³ Spiritual practices

⁸⁴ See the heading "Limitation of Object Happiness." on page three.

specific results. For example, we take employment and a check comes two weeks later. Teeth are brushed so cavities don't develop. However, no matter how seemingly intelligent on the surface, **performance of actions solely for intended results is spiritually unwise because attention, which should be concentrated on the skillful performance of the action, is dissipated by anxious concern for results.** A child can be so concerned with an imagined result that it misses the pleasure of its trip to the zoo and is heard to say, "Are we having fun yet, mommy?" How many job assignments have been hopelessly botched and thoroughly unenjoyed because of performance anxiety? A person suffers through school to get a job, gets the job to support a family, produces the family to enjoy retirement; yet at every stage the fullness of the present is unappreciated because of an unhealthy fixation on the future. Excessive concern for result can cast a gloomy penumbra over our lives, agitating the Subtle Body and denying us the full pleasure of meditation in action.

MEDITATION IN ACTION

The remedy is to perform the action for its own sake. Understand possible consequences beforehand, but switch attention off the result to the performance of the action itself. **When attention is fully engaged in action, thought or feeling (subtle actions), it enters the moment, hopefully transcends the mind, and experiences the Self.** And, truth to tell, a fully-enjoyed and efficiently-performed action is more likely to materialize an intended result than one deprived of the mind's attention. Finally, action from this "here and now" state breaks the *vasana* for results, purifying the Subtle Body of pernicious extroverting waves.

WATCH OUT FOR THE EGO

Action *yoga* demands a change of attitude toward action. Instead of thinking it has been brought to earth to attain happiness through action and the accumulation of self-defined results, the ego is encouraged to define life's goal as Self realization. Action *yoga* does not destroy the ego, remove it from daily life, or condemn it to specific religious activities, but purifies its relationship to the body and the world. In the short run, however, because of a perceived threat to the ego, the practice of action *yoga* may cause disturbance and hinder meditation. In fact, action *yoga*, because it produces

resistance, offers an excellent way to identify ego and coax it out from behind its wall of self-serving rationalizations and deceits.

Enough theory. How does it work? First, all actions, even the most trivial, are consecrated, dedicated at the altar of one's choosing, and the results renounced. **Results dedicated to a higher altar accrue to the altar's account rather than to the ego's.** For example, I want a new automobile. Before acting to manifest the desire, I should examine my motives. Will the automobile make it easier to practice meditation? If the present vehicle won't get me to work, and I need work to support myself and take care of obligations (so I have time to meditate), the purchase of a vehicle qualifies as action *yoga*. This technique calls for great integrity because the ego is not above using spiritual ideas to justify unspiritual impulses. If the motivation is capricious- luxury or status, for example - the actions will conflict with spiritual values, agitating the mind and reinforcing unhelpful *samskaras*.

Assuming the reasons are not frivolous, in an attitude of love and service, **action yoga enjoins one to consciously dedicate the endeavor at beginning, a practice meant to hold one's ideal (hopefully Self realization) in consciousness.** When actions are performed for someone or something other than one's ego, the disturbing and extroverting waves caused by anxiety over results are effaced.⁸⁵ Actions dedicated to causes and ideals, particularly those fueled by a sense of injustice or unexamined motives, do not necessarily qualify as action *yoga* because the cause, like nationalism, for instance, may be the result of group ego - as unreal one's own.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Dedication at the onset of action should be balanced by an attitude of gratitude when results, positive or negative, accrue. Each life experience, no matter how trivial, is a fructification of previous actions and provides an excellent opportunity for practicing gratitude - even when unwanted results manifest. For example, a man took a flight from New York to San Francisco which was forced to make an emergency landing in Oakland causing him to miss an important appointment. He could either be upset he didn't receive the intended result or be happy to be alive. Taking what comes as a gift neutralizes likes and dislikes. Since likes and dislikes are the cornerstone of Ego, purifying them exposes ego's views. When practice reveals an unhealthy attitude the meditator can set out to remove it.

⁸⁵ The removal of disturbing waves in the Subtle Body is defined as *yoga* by Patanjali.

DESIRE IS STRESS

One major source of agitation is the ego's belief that the likelihood of a favorable consequence is enhanced by desire for that outcome. But if the results of actions were a consequence of desire everyone who bought a lottery ticket would win the lottery. The desire for a particular result plays a bit part in the fructification of results.⁸⁶

The nature of the action, the condition of the field in which the action is initiated, the availability of the intended object, and the desires of others vying for the same result ultimately determine the result. Finally, intense desire for an object, because it disturbs the mind, often compromises appropriate and timely action, mitigating against reaping the intended result.

WHAT WILL BE WILL BE

With actions consecrated and the desire for the results renounced,⁸⁷ the anxiety for the result (stress) that usually accompanies the interval between the initiation of an action and its result does not recycle - making the mind more meditative because it relieves the ego of stress as it does its doings. Consistently practiced, **action yoga slowly chips off *vasana* accretions and lets the meditator enjoy a dynamic life as it simultaneously prepares the mind for meditation.**

Occasionally, because ego is excessively identified with a spiritually unhealthy desire, consecration and the renunciation of the fruits of action produces noticeable short-term mental turbulence. Addictions and compulsions are examples of encrusted desires or fears which, though inimical to spiritual growth, produce strong reactions in the Subtle Body when we try to work on them. Conversely, not every action that makes us temporarily feel good is spiritually beneficial. On the basis of short-term benefits a seemingly spiritual case can be made for pursuing sense pleasures in that their immediate effect is often a feeling of wholeness and contentment. But in the long run sense pursuit does not qualify as spiritual practice

⁸⁶ Because nearly everything that comes in life comes through people desire is always a factor. However, how desire affects the results is always indeterminate.

⁸⁷ The results can't be renounced because they aren't up to the actor. The renunciation of desire is just a formal way of saying "what will be, will be."

because it produces binding *vasanas* which manifest as deep attachment to the senses and emotions.

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

THINK FROM THE SELF

If action *yoga* recommends a change in attitude toward action, **knowledge *yoga* requires a change in the way we think.** Because Intellect is ordinarily under the influence of Ego, its ideas are not in harmony with reality. Knowledge *yoga* aims to detach Intellect from Ego and train it to think from the Self.

“Thinking from the Self” means that impersonal truth, not personal prejudice, becomes the center of one's thought life, the point from which thoughts originate and to which they return.

Self ignorance manifests first as a confused and unrealistic thought life which trickles down to disturb and delude the emotions, eventually contaminating one's contact with the outer world. Because it eliminates incorrect, ignorance-born ego-centered thoughts, reality-based knowledge produces an harmonious, clear, and luminous Subtle Body, one suited to meditation and self inquiry.⁸⁸

The *yoga* of knowledge relies on Intellect's power of discrimination, analysis, and inquiry to effect changes. Before charging into the spiritual fray armed with personal opinions, ill-considered ideas, beliefs, and superstitions, the meditator will be well-served to make a systematic and dispassionate study of his or her chosen path. A clear idea of the Self and the nature of enlightenment, the three bodies and states, and the methods of purification removes many obstacle from the path.

This knowledge is not merely "intuition" or "guidance" which, like book knowledge, is subject to interpretation and misapplication, filtering through ego's well-entrenched prejudices, fears, and desires, but should be carefully imparted by a compassionate Self realized teacher skilled in the methods of transmission.

Atma Bodh is a basic path of knowledge text.

⁸⁸ In addition to Subtle Body transcendence the purpose of meditation is to produce a clear Subtle Body so the meditator can make an inquiry into the Self. If the Subtle Body is disturbed it can't identify and identity with the Self.

Meditation and Self knowledge go hand in hand. Transcendence in itself, experience of the Self, is not liberation because it is subject to change, owing to the power of unpurified *samskaras* to generate *samsaric*⁸⁹ experience. However, transcendence reveals the Self and facilitates discrimination, not only during transcendental episodes, when it is especially powerful, but later in normal ego states, owing to an increase of knowledge-based faith brought on by the experience.

The Self knowledge arising from discrimination, like meditation technique, produces transcendence in and of itself. Like the oroboros, the mythical creature that ingests itself, Intellect, skillfully applying knowledge, can gobble Subtle Body phenomena so effectively the waves subside completely, producing transcendence.

MEDITATION

Nothing purifies like experience of the Self which releases a flood of healing, cleansing spiritual energy into the conscious and unconscious minds. Although most epiphanies wear off in a matter of hours, occasionally days, they produce spiritual *vasanas* which inspire practice and keep the mind focused on the goal. Practiced diligently, meditation techniques, purify the mind because they bring awareness to unholy patterns of thought and feeling.

Transcendence does not conflict with purification. When the meditator transcends the mind and begins to see from the plane of the Self, the need to "maintain" consciousness dissolves, since the Self is effortless Awareness. Knowledge of the mind's patterns and complexes is more accurate from the Self's point of view than knowledge derived from a witness created out of one part of the mind. Secondly, transcendence breaks attachment to the mind, making it easier to purify.

Finally, transcendence can produce Self knowledge, the ultimate purifier.⁹⁰ In fact, the Self realized meditator realizes the absurdity in trying to purify something that will again become impure without more *sadhana*. The purpose of purification is not to become pure but to create a problem-free mind, one that can calmly make an inquiry into the Self. Self realization is the discovery that one is pure by default.

⁸⁹ Ordinary perception and all the attendant emotional and intellectual misconceptions that go with it.

⁹⁰ The Self is unchangeable and not made of parts. Therefore it cannot be purified.

THE ROPES

In conjunction with the extroverting force of the *samskaras* and the development of Ego,⁹¹ three additional Causal Body factors color everyday experience and impact on meditation. Because no psychological, spiritual, or philosophical system except the Vedic has articulated this aspect of psychic and cosmic reality so carefully, and because English words don't do it justice, I've retained the Sanskrit terms. Evolved before the psyche and gross matter, *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* in their Causal condition cannot be known by the senses. However, they can be inferred by observing the texture of thought, feeling, and behavior patterns.

Sattva, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* are called "*gunas*,"⁹² which translates as "ropes" and "qualities." The vaguely pejorative "rope" idea implies that these three energies bind the Self, Consciousness, to its psychic and physical creations. In fact the Self is always transcendent, but, for a technical reason,⁹³ apparently gets caught up in Its creations. To free the ever-free Self from Its apparent identification with material and psychic reality, knowledge of the *gunas* is extremely valuable. The rope metaphor is useful in that it invokes the sense of three interweaving strands of energy making up the whole creation.

SATTVA

The meaning of "*Sattva*" can be divined from its root "*sat*," another name for the Self, which means "reality," "being," "truth." Consciousness as "*sat*" indicates the Self's quality of awareness or light. As such "*sattva*," which has been assigned the color white, is the principle of light or knowledge in the universe. The perceptive senses discussed above⁹⁴ evolved from the *sattvic* aspect of the creation. The senses beam "light," Consciousness, onto the sense objects, illumining them and making them known, experienceable. *Sattva* is not physical light. The knowledge of sound, for instance, is possible because the *sattvic* element in the hearing center in the Subtle Body "illumines" the sounds coming in from the material world - and so on for all the senses.

⁹¹ See Chapter 2, "Meditation The Science of the Self by the Author."

⁹² Pronounced "goon uhs"

⁹³ Maya or the non-apprehension of the Self.

⁹⁴ See "The Psychology of Meditation" page 52.

Put together, the *sattvic* elements in the five perceptive senses provide the foundation for the evolution of the mind, the knowing instrument. The mind knows what it knows because of *Sattva*'s luminous reflective quality.⁹⁵ *Sattva* is not sentient but acts like a mirror, accurately reflecting Consciousness. Because there is no creativity without knowledge, the creative functions of the mind are completely dependent on *Sattva*. And the physical body is healthiest and least prone to disease when the *sattvic* component dominates the subtle body. To creatively correct imbalances and dysfunction in the physical and psychological systems, accurate knowledge is essential.

The "being" aspect of *Sattva* inclines the mind to peace. When the mind is peaceful the healing and creative powers of Consciousness, instead of dissipating into excess mental activity or becoming veiled by sloth, flood directly into the body, washing away blockages in the physiological systems, purifying the nerve channels,⁹⁶ invigorating cellular life.

A predominately *sattvic* mind is termed "pure," uncontaminated by large proportions of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. When the mind is *sattvic*, clarity of thought occurs, insight is commonplace, intuition active, discrimination precise, dispassion profound, and meditation possible.

Sattva is responsible for intelligence. A mind under the influence of this *guna* is capable of long flights into subtle realms. All occasions of vast knowing and deep understanding depend on the *sattvic* quality. *Sattva* conduces the mind to happiness because it accurately reflects the joy inherent in the Self.

RAJAS

Creativity involves three factors: intelligence, substance, and activity. For example, to make a pot, clay, an idea in the potter's mind, and the energy to shape the clay is required. While *Sattva* provides the intelligence to shape a creation, and *Tamas* the substance, the dynamic energy shaping all creative activity is called *Rajas*. Atomic power, thermodynamics, volcanic activity, the movement of the seas and winds, the physiological and nervous systems, and the power to move the mind and emotions are due to the influence of *Rajas*. Wherever there is motion, activity, *Rajas* is at work. The five physiological systems and the five active organs, hands, feet, speech, the anus and sex, evolve from *Rajas*.

⁹⁵ Actually the Self is the knower but the mind seems to know because of its proximity to the Self.

⁹⁶ *Nadis*

Psychologically, a mind dominated by *Rajas*, like a high-frequency transmitter in a sealed container, projects intense waves of thought and feeling. Though highly prized by goal-oriented persons, coffee drinkers especially, for its power to temporarily activate the mind, *rajasic* projections reverberate in the mind creating confusion, eventually delusion, and ultimately loss of discrimination.

Rajas, symbolized by the color red, is termed the "mode of passion." A person who doesn't know who he or she is, consciously and/or unconsciously experiences profound a sense of emptiness. Not knowing the origin, one erroneously assumes that possessing and enjoying certain objects will erase the feeling. Because the objects of desire do not automatically fall into one's lap, a great deal of activity, mental, emotional, and physical, is necessary to manifest them. Desire-prompted activity such as ambition, for example, is synonymous with stress, the effects of which are well-known. *Rajas* creates continual static noise in the mind, efficiently draining energy.

Because of a fiery nature, *Rajas* purifies the water elements from the subtle and physical bodies producing a feeling of thirst and attachment. Persons suffering from an excess of *Rajas* tend to be emotionally needy and mentally distressed, forced into a life of unceasing activity in an attempt to possess and acquire what has not been gained, and to protect and insure what has.

In spite of its dynamism, a mind dominated by *Rajas* inevitably becomes a powerful spiritual enemy because its intense mental waves - greed, aggression, desire, restlessness, anxiety, and longing - obscure the shining of the Self, the source of peace and happiness. *Rajasic* people suffer greatly because *Rajas* forces them to project the content of their subconscious onto the world outside. As a result they have problematic relationships, little contact with their true feelings, and virtually no Self knowledge.

TAMAS

Tamas, the dark third strand in the psychic rope, is known in spiritual psychology as the "veiling" energy. On the metaphysical level the term refers to a state of mind that veils, or is veiled from, the Self. Because the Self's gentle loving light does not apparently illumine the mind, the person lives in spiritual darkness. Fear is a natural reaction to the dark and when we're fearful we hide, so *tamasic* people are continually hiding - from themselves, the world, and God. The best way to hide is to sleep, so sleep, including all its waking forms, sensual indulgence and the like, is pursued with vigor.

Sleep is a symbol for ignorance, and *tamasic* persons are ignorant, not only of the Self but also of themselves and goings-on in the world.

Tamas, all that is heavy and sleeping in nature, is the power of inertia and entropy inherent in things. Physical substance, solidity, substantiality, and insentientcy evolve from *Tamas*. An indispensable force, it is responsible for the most universally loved and necessary activity - sleep. Without it the mind would never rest and the organism would die.

On a psychological level, moderate *Tamas* conduces to a practical earthy intelligence, a preponderance to ignorance, dullness, inadvertence, lethargy, depression, and sloth. Just as *Rajas* is responsible for the universal tendency to project, *Tamas* is responsible for an equally universal tendency - veiling or denial. When the mind sits under its delusory cloud, the soul can't distinguish between the real and unreal, nor accurately assess its own strengths and weaknesses, nor keep the mind fixed on goals. A preponderantly *tamasic* mind is spiritually useless because its heavy clouds cover the luminous nature of the mind, making meditation and Self realization impossible.

Tamas inspires the tendency to escape one's duties and responsibilities, discourages ambitious undertakings, and leads to a sensuous, inadvertent and miserable life, one plagued by accidents, losses, and mistakes. An excess of *Tamas* in the subtle body creates conditions suitable for disease because it blocks the flow of *shakti*, the energizing and healing power of the Self, to the physiological and cellular levels.

When the *gunas* are balanced, the body and mind are healthy and the soul relatively happy. Unfortunately the *gunas* are in a state of continual flux; one predominates for a few hours, then a second, and finally a third, so that throughout the day one may experience intense activity, moments of clarity, and mind-numbing dullness.

Experience has demonstrated a direct connection between mental and emotional pain and a predominance of *Rajas* and *Tamas* relative to *Sattva*. Because the mind is the instrument of meditation and knowledge, it has also been noted that a preponderance of the light element is conducive to meditation and Self realization. When the mind is covered with *tamasic* clouds perception is veiled and knowledge, therefore, inaccurate. Like a strong wind *rajasic* projections whip the mind into frenzied waves, distorting perception and knowledge.

Three buckets of water stand in front of a white wall. The sun reflects off the water producing three reflected suns on the wall. A strong wind roiling the contents of the first bucket produces a dancing image of the sun

on the wall. The second, filled with muddy water, produces a dull dark spot, and the third containing clear and still water generates an accurate reflection of the sun. If the purpose of meditation is Self realization and the mind is the instrument through which the Self is known, it stands to reason that accurate identification of the Self depends on a clear still mind.

PURE MIND

Experience has proven an ironclad connection between the state of positive happiness and a pure mind, one capable of channeling Self bliss into the emotional plane, reflecting Self intelligence off the intellectual plane, uplifting and divinizing thought, and pouring the *shakti* into the body to create radiant health and a dynamic life.

When the meditator consistently feels a sense of uncaused happiness and unexplained peace the mind is pure. Happiness can't be attributed to a specific situation, change in status, person or persons, belief or belief system, the presence or absence of a physical object, or any other worldly item. Secondly, a pure mind is free of the belief that attainment of objects or accomplishment of activities will increase one's sense of well-being. Desire is no longer compulsive, indicating that *Rajas* has been reduced to a manageable level. Because *Tamas* is controlled, perception is accurate and knowledge true to its object, allowing the individual to make decisions based on fact, and not on unconscious projections. Finally, spontaneous and deep meditations happen automatically, or are produced with minimum effort.

Complete purification of *Rajas* and *Tamas* is neither possible nor desirable. A small proportion of *Tamas* is necessary for grounding experience, both worldly and spiritual, and a larger proportion of *Rajas* underwrites the vitality necessary to purify the mind. But the aim of all spiritual and religious work is to see that the lion's share of the mind is *sattvic*. A *sattvic* mind is meditation-worthy, capable of discriminative Self inquiry.

A SIMPLE TECHNIQUE

The verse asks the meditator to “meditate with unswerving attention on the Self.” Practiced properly the following technique will introduce the meditator to the Self.

THE BODY

No particular physical position is required for this type of meditation, although a number of the meditative poses suggested by Hatha Yoga may be useful even though they were designed for a different type of *sadhana*.⁹⁷ Difficult poses like the full and half-lotus are not recommended unless the body feels comfortable in them from the beginning. In India where *Yoga* evolved people have no furniture so sitting cross-legged on the ground is second nature. But if you experience pain or discomfort because your feet are resting on top of the thighs, it's best to opt for an easy chair or a simple cross-legged position. Except for the attempt to awaken dormant energies in the body, a practice not recommended for neophytes, the position of the body isn't critical. It should be comfortable and the meditator prepared to take a short vacation. Even prone positions are acceptable if the meditator can avoid falling asleep.

ATTITUDE

On the mental level the pose should be kingly or queenly: gracious, upright, poised, noble, and generous. A careful, sensitive, inquiring state of mind, like a botanist patiently examining a delicate flower, is suggested. The meditator should think of meditation as an afternoon on the beach, not a shift in the mines.

With the eyes closed, settle in.

What's next?

Ask for help. Obviously, if you knew who you were you wouldn't be meditating in the first place, so by sitting you are really saying you don't know anything, the most essential ingredient for a successful meditation. Most meditators believe in a higher power, God, a spirit guide, guru figure, the saints, the universe, "guidance," a deity - whatever. Irrespective of the invocation's form, the Self, all-knowing Consciousness, which hears every thought and feeling, understands the need and will respond appropriately. The Self sneaked the meditation idea into the mind in the first place so the meditator needn't worry. Everything that needs to happen will happen. The more fervent the prayer, the better - the squeaky wheel gets the grease

⁹⁷ *Kundalini sadhana*, the awakening of the dormant "electricity of Consciousness" in the body. The style of meditation offered here is called "transcendental" because it is designed to lift the mind out of the body.

Make a resolution to leave your worries behind. It's good to meditate in a place not used for other activities. Feel satisfied you are making an effort to meditate. Third, clear the mind of memories of previous meditations, good or bad. Trying to improve on a bad meditation or reproduce a good one is futile and only agitates the mind.

BODY SCAN

After the invocation scan and relax the body from the feet up. If you have a hard time relaxing use a little visualization. Imagine you're a warm peaceful light-filled ball of consciousness inside your feet and expand until the feet feel hollow. Next bore your way up the legs hollowing out the ankles, knees, and hips. Take your time. It may seem a silly trick but it works because the body is actually a vast field of consciousness, not a constipated little scrap of meat. If the "ball" doesn't work use any method you wish to relax your way up the legs. Because they are associated with waste removal the stomach and abdominal organs often carry negative energy, so spend a bit of time working in this area. Move up and explore the chest. Its association with the emotional center causes angry and unforgiving feelings to lodge there, so the muscles are often tight. Scan leisurely, leaving it light-filled and relaxed, then move up to the neck and shoulders. Much mental tension accumulates here so take your time. When it's relaxed move out to the tips of the fingers and hollow out the arms like you did the legs. Then redo the neck and shoulders.

The face we carry around in the world usually isn't our real face so we need to do something to get it back to normal. Work around the chin, mouth, and cheeks first and then up to the eyes and forehead. You'll find lots of tiny little vibrations hovering around these regions so release the muscles supporting them and let them dissipate. A smile or frown means too much energy's been left behind. Aim for the indifferent look of a Buddha or the peaceful face of the dead.

The idea behind all this scanning and relaxing is to prepare the body for your exit. It might be helpful to think of the body as an automobile and yourself as the driver. The driver has returned from a long day on the road, is going to park the car in the garage, and enter his or her warm comfortable home for the evening. Before you park it for good, check the whole thing to see that it's snug in its seat and turn your attention to the breath.

THE BREATH

The breath, as you've undoubtedly noticed, goes in and out nicely on its own. The idea is to watch the breath, not breathe consciously, although you may notice that observing the breath consciousnesses it a bit. Not to worry. It will soon settle down and return to its normal pattern. Because it means ego, control is unnecessary. The point of meditation is to relax, not just physically but mentally. Watching the breath occupies the mind with a simple rhythmic object. Because it wants glamour and excitement, the mind quickly grows bored, a sign you're proceeding properly. Watching the breath is boring. But boring's good. Learning to enjoy boredom is one of the benefits of meditation.

At this point give the mind a job. Train your attention to "ride" on the breath as it goes in and out. When the breath is out the attention should flow out and when the breath comes flowing in, the attention comes with it, as if sitting on an upside-down swing.

Of course, the mind will wander. Pull it back and synchronize it with the breath. It needn't ride perfectly on every breath. Don't get upset if it doesn't work immediately. Take your time.

Meditation's not about the breath anyway. The breath's only a tool. How long should one work with it? There's no hard and fast rule, sometimes five or ten minutes, sometimes longer. It just depends. What you're looking for is a sign that the mind is getting quiet because the mind stills quickly when synchronized with the breath.

If you see that the mind and breath are synchronizing use surplus attention to release pent-up thoughts and feelings on the outbreath. Don't relate to or analyze the thoughts/feelings at this point, simply pay attention to what you're doing, and let the mind empty on its own. Just as the outbreath cleanses the body, releasing thoughts detoxifies the mind. From a meditative perspective the meditator's relationship to the thoughts is more important than the thoughts themselves. Later, when you're seeing from the Self, you may wish to analyze them, even though ultimately all thoughts are basically useless. At this point don't worry about losing them, they'll be back. The mind will never completely empty, so don't worry. The point of meditation is to take a little pressure off and help it quiet down.

THE SILENCE⁹⁸

The mind is becoming quiet when you become conscious of all sorts of sounds of which you were previously unaware - like going to sleep. You never hear the clock ticking until you want to sleep precisely because the mind, formerly occupied with its thoughts, is emptying. You may hear the heart beat, the scratching of the breath as it goes in and out, snippets of conversation taking place blocks away, the hum of the kitchen refrigerator, a fly buzzing lazily in the adjoining room. The thoughts may be amplified, larger than life, or slower as if slogging through molasses. You might start picking up on them as they start rather than midway through their cycle.

You will notice these things because you are now surrounded by a bubble of Silence which, depending on the quietude of the mind, may hardly be noticeable or roar as it does out on the great plains in the dead of a summer night.

When the Silence appears as a tangible presence, take your attention from the breath and fix it on the Silence. Because it's served its purpose the breath should drop out of consciousness, or seem very light, faint, far away, irrelevant. Sometimes the mind gets completely swallowed by the silence and you find yourself deep within your Self, unaware of the breath, the noises in the room, your thoughts, absolutely everything - a state similar to conscious sleep. Time dissolves and you are overcome with an ecstatic peacefulness, difficult to describe.

Many unusual experiences can happen when the mind is quiet. Let them happen, don't cling. All experience, like thought, is essentially transitory, not subject to ego control. And the purpose of meditation is not to produce specific pleasurable experiences but to inquire into the nature of the Self and the mind.

Usually the mind remains partially active and the senses report information but the thoughts and sounds appear into and disappear out of the Silence like phantoms. The silent peaceful Awareness in which they appear is experienced as a rocklike, real, luminous and eternal presence. The experience of the Silence is the essence of meditation because it lets the meditator observe first hand the insubstantiality and unreality of the body/mind instrument in a way reading books and listening to lectures can never do.

⁹⁸ The Silence is not merely the absence of sound or thought. It is the Awareness of both sound and relative silence, the absence of noise.

If the ego insists on intruding, making itself uncomfortable in the Silence, trying to distract like a needy child, teach it to surrender, allowing the thoughts and feelings to arise and fall without interference. Think of the Silence as the altar of the inner temple and take pleasure witnessing the thoughts and feelings arise out of and disappear back into It. **The discipline of meditation involves a struggle with the ego to keep attention fixed on the Silence.** If the Silence is particularly deep or radiant the ego will be so stunned it will surrender completely, like an awestruck kid at a carnival. But this is not always the case, not because the Silence is unattractive, but because powerful *samskaras* carry the meditator's mind far afield.

The meditation is not creating the silence, although it may seem so. The Silence is the substratum of all experience, the self-luminous Consciousness that is the source of every perception. The technique simply withdraws enough consciousness from the body and mind to allow the ever-present and apparently-hidden Silence to manifest.

DISCRIMINATION

At this point a path to *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the state of mind without thought opens up. *Nir* means "without" and *vikalpa* "thought." To achieve this state the Silence needs to be allowed to absorb all *vikalpas*, Subtle Body activities, very difficult practice in so far as one never knows how thick and deep the *samskaras* producing the thoughts and feelings actually are. Yogis sometimes take twenty or thirty years to attain this virtually inaccessible state. Getting rid of the thoughts is difficult enough but getting rid of the watcher, the ego, the mind's most subtle thought, is nearly impossible. The state itself is indescribable because the ego, the one who might describe it is gone. And since the mind is dead, no objects appear in Consciousness to describe. *Nirvikalpa samadhi* is a kind of unconscious enlightenment or negative liberation but without anyone there, except the Self, to enjoy it. And to the Self it's no more interesting than a state of mind with thought, since the presence or absence of thoughts has nothing to do with the Self and It requires no concentration or meditation to achieve this state because it's *nirvalkapa*, without thoughts, by nature. One doesn't speak of discrimination in this state because there's nothing to discriminate. At best, it like a conscious sleep without any world, the ultimate spiritual drug. And Self knowledge can't take place because there's no one there to receive it. Therefore, should the meditator/ego happen to return to the world he or she will not be enlightened since his or her Self ignorance will not have been

removed. If the meditator can realize through discrimination that he or she is the Self, there will be no need to turn the mind into a void.

To discriminate or inquire a discriminator and two objects are necessary. And the meditation described above fulfills this condition. We have the Self in the form of Silence and the not-Self in the form of the mind, and a wide awake meditator armed with enough information to permit discrimination. Once the discrimination is made the **trick is to identify the meditator, who seems to be observing the Self as an object, as the Self.** The texts describing this state say that when this happens the subject and object “become” one. In fact there’s no “becoming” because they are already one. So it’s just a discovery, or re-discovery as the case may be, of something very familiar but somehow forgotten.

During the discrimination the questions that arise can only be answered by realizing that the answers and the questions are “not self” or by realizing that the questioner is the Self, in which case all questioning ceases. **The point of discrimination is not to get an experience of the Self since one already has that, but to remove the ignorance that is causing the meditator to confuse the Self and the not Self.** Once the ignorance is removed the meditator remains as the Self. And the not self “disappears.”

The disappearance of the not-self is either conditional or unconditional. Unconditional disappearance is illustrated by the example of the snake and the rope.⁹⁹ Knowledge of the rope causes the snake to disappear for good.

Conditional disappearance, equal to unconditional disappearance in every way, allows for a slightly different perception. When the knowledge that the water appearing on hot desert sands is realized to be a projection of the senses, the water does not disappear - but the observer does not rush out to drink. This why enlightenment is called *jnanam*, knowledge, and has nothing to do with whether the mind is empty or not or whether one is enjoying a particular “spiritual” state of mind.

In one case the world is not perceived as anything other than the Self and in the other the world is seen as an unreal superimposition on the Self. In both cases **the Seer is free of the seen and will not chase object happiness** because the pleasure of knowing oneself as the Self cannot be surpassed.

“The meditator should merge the entire world

⁹⁹ See the commentary on verse 26, page 43.

*of objects in the Self alone and experiencing it
as uncontaminated as the sky.”*

(38)

For the one who's abandoned the quest for object happiness, is "peaceful of heart, calm of mind, and desirous of Liberation,"¹⁰⁰ the knowledge enshrined here outlines the subtle experiment that will dispel the confusion caused by the long-standing association of the Self with its instruments.

The “merger” referred to in this verse is accomplished by withdrawing attention from the thoughts in the mind, the objects. The state of deep sleep, which is a fitting, if provocative, symbol of enlightenment, is only accessible when one's thoughts and feelings (“ the objects” and, of course, the thinker/feeler ego,) have been “merged” or dissolved into sleep. This meditation might be accurately described as waking “sleep.”

The “merger” in sleep is a letting go of the thoughts and feelings keeping the Subtle Body active. As long as the waking ego is obsessing and ruminating on the day's experiences or worrying about tomorrow, sleep will not come. Similarly, in meditation, the Self is not experienced as long as one's attention is fixed on the mind.¹⁰¹

*“When the discriminator transcends
the relative plane and realizes the Self,
he or she “becomes” the Self
and should cease to identify
with all objects.”*

(39)

Successful meditation dissolves the meditating ego into the state of pure Seeing, a state free of the belief that the subject and objects are objectively real.¹⁰² In this state everything is perceived as equal in value to everything else - which means that there is no tendency for or against acting out whatever *vasanas* bubble up from the Causal Body. This is why enlightenment or Self realization is called liberation.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Verse 1

¹⁰¹ No experience actually takes place in the outside world. The “world” is only the mind. All one's relationships are only relationships with the thoughts and feelings, perceptions and memories in the mind.

¹⁰² Seeing from the Self as the Self does not create a different perception or experience in the mind. It only changes the knowledge one has about the meaning of the perceptions and experiences.

¹⁰³ Freedom or “*moksha*.”

In a state of pure freedom anything is possible, including contacting objects. If the meditator should reason that contacting the objects in other than a dispassionate and discriminating spirit would not affect the *sattvic* quality of the mind, he or she should think twice.¹⁰⁴

Shankar's admonition, concealed beneath the seemingly bland and matter of fact words, "discard identification with all objects," cautions the meditator to avoid arrogance in evaluating the power of residual *samskaras*. Contrary to popular opinion, Self-Realization doesn't automatically free the ego of all fears and desires, perceptions and impulses. However, it allows one to see how unreal they are, a vision that makes it easy to allow them the die on the vine.

ENLIGHTENMENT SICKNESS

However, the tendency at this stage favors throwing caution to the winds and indulging.¹⁰⁵ But the belief in having one's cake and eating it too is delusional. Little by little, in the most innocent and imperceptible way, one becomes re-identified with ego and its *karma*. So to avoid a fall, "discard identification with all objects."¹⁰⁶

Nothing's to be gained because

***"No distinctions like knower, knowledge, and
object of knowledge exist in the Self.
It is endless bliss shining alone."***

¹⁰⁴ Of course ego contact with objects will not affect the Self but this is not the issue with a newly Self realized person. Whether the knowledge "I am the Self" sticks in the mind is. If the meditator is indiscriminate the mind can become clouded and the knowledge lost. Only after a period that depends on the relative power of the individual's *samskaras* - **when the knowledge is absolutely firm**- can the individual contact objects with impunity. At this point, the need to contact objects or engage in activities has been destroyed so the question is essentially moot. After this, even if stray *vasanas* are put into play they don't affect the knowledge.

¹⁰⁵ This feeling, which indicates residual ignorance, is caused by the memory of past frustrations and is motivated by the ego trying to make up for lost time.

¹⁰⁶ Without an identification with objects the ego dies. This is a very controversial verse because it contradicts the conventional wisdom that the ego has to completely die for enlightenment to occur. Depending on the state of the *samskaras*, which differs from individual to individual the ego "death" that allows Self realization lasts for varying periods. If the re-emergent ego fails to get knowledge of the Self it returns to *samsaric* experience and bondage. If it understands itself to be the Self and the knowledge is "firm," that is, unforgettable, it may still have to deal with a few well-entrenched *vasanas*. The verse is reminding the meditator not to get identified with them.

(40)

One symptom of enlightenment sickness is the belief that desire gratification can enhance the bliss of Self-Realization, but indulgence depends on the feeling of separation from a desired object. The enlightened, however, see no distinction between the Self and objects. Because everything is already accomplished, enjoyment is one's nature, not a sensation arising from the interaction between a subject and an object.

***"Churning the lower with the higher mind
ignite the fire of Knowledge.
It will consume the fuel of ignorance."***

(41)

The "Grace of God" school (which attracts underachievers) argues that enlightenment "just happens." A man was sitting under a tree thinking about nothing in particular when a coconut fell on his head and split open. God, who'd been incarcerated for eons, popped out, touched the man's third eye, and presto-chango - "enlightenment."

On the other side are the classic overachievers, who think nothing of charging four hundred dollars on Visa for a weekend satellite video "enlightenment intensive" with a fashionable guru expecting to pick up Transcendental Bliss before showing up at the office on Monday morning. Like the author in his misspent youth, the overachiever will abandon everything and rush off to the Himalayas to "find God" at the drop of a hat. Twisting the body like a pretzel, eating alfalfa sprouts, chanting mystic syllables and gazing at the yin-yang superimposed on OM while a guru, who has compassionately relieved the devotee of all discretionary income, beats the soles of his/her feet with a cactus to remove egoism, seems a sensible path to the goal. The overachiever's god is "doing" and no doing is too farfetched. Genius is not required to see that such behavior is motivated by ignorance and will not produce Enlightenment.

Because the Self is self-evident and already realized, neither doing or non-doing is going to produce the Self. However, a judicious program of action and non-action can "ignite the fire of Knowledge," i.e. create conditions conducive to meditation and Self-Realization.

"Churning the higher and lower self" will remove most of the effects of ignorance - desire, fear, negative emotion, delusion, attachment, etc. but not the cause; only knowledge removes ignorance. The verse is saying that since

the mind is constantly thinking, and thinking about what it's thinking without causing any substantial shift in awareness, why not train it to purify itself and generate a spiritual awakening?

Discriminating between the Ego's and the Self's thought systems causes friction in the mind.¹⁰⁷ At every moment ego is generating judgments and feelings and ideas that express its limited view of itself and the world, thereby keeping itself in ignorance. The meditator/discriminator is asked to constantly monitor the flow of thought and apply the opposite thought to all ignorance-inspired thoughts. Applying the opposite thought means that one should contemplate the limitations in the ego's views and understand why the spiritual view is appropriate.¹⁰⁸ And the spiritual view is always appropriate if one values freedom, peace, truth, and real love. When the opposite thought is established it should become the basis of action. In this way *samskaras* for "knowledge" are produced and the right thoughts appears ever more frequently in the mind - crowding out the erroneous ones.

The information supplied here concerning the nature of the Self and the three bodies is the "opposite thought." The self-serving views supplied by the ego over the course of one's lifetime are considered ignorance.

For example, the popular view that "I can have it all" is ignorance for at least two reasons: (1) because the ego is limited it can't, and (2) as the Self you already do. The view that "I'm special" is ignorance for at least two reasons: (1) as an ego you're just the five elements, mind, intellect, and ego like everyone else, and (2) as the Self you're just pure Consciousness like everyone else. The view that someone other than oneself can make one happy is ignorance for at least two reasons: (1) they can't, except temporarily and (2) there isn't anyone else. The view that something's wrong with the world is ignorance for at least two reasons: (1) in deep sleep you're not bothered by the world and (2) the world is only in your mind -which is unreal. The view that something's wrong with oneself is ignorance for at least two reasons: (1) you're not the body/mind/intellect/ego bundle, and (2) you're the Self. A book the size of the New York phone directory would undoubtedly be too small to list all possible ignorant ideas in the human mind. To make it easy Vedanta has reduced them to short list: I am not the body, mind, intellect, ego.

¹⁰⁷ Hence the churning metaphor which comes from a method of igniting fire by friction produced from churning a stick between two hollowed-out blocks of wood with a bow

¹⁰⁸ Applying the opposite thought transforms the emotions too. Spiritual science claims that incorrect views about oneself and the world are the primary cause of emotional dysfunction. When the thoughts change the feelings change. Trying to transform oneself emotionally without addressing the underlying reasons is futile.

*“As dawn dispels darkness before the sun appears,
the Self rises in the sky of the Heart when right knowledge
dispels the darkness within.”*

(42)

*“Though an ever-present reality,
the Self is not realized
due to ignorance.
Its realization is like
the discovery of a lost object.”*

(43)

THE SEEKER IS THE SOUGHT

When we begin to walk the spiritual path how are we to know that what we're seeking is ourselves? In the mistaken belief that circumstances will materialize it we often set out to follow an alternative way of life, enter into a relationship with a spiritual person, or take up mystic and religious practices. Yet no matter how relatively peaceful our situation becomes, we inevitably have to admit that the ultimate goal, Enlightenment, remains elusive and distant. For many years the Buddha tried unsuccessfully to find enlightenment in asceticism and other practices, for example. Not until he sat down under a tree and renounced all effort did he discover that he was what he was seeking.

A trick painting shows a black vase on a white background. However, if one relaxes the mind as one views two faces in profile appear as the as the outlines of the vase.

A secretary put a pencil behind her ear when the phone rang. During a long conversation she forgot where she put it, instigating a frantic search. A co-worker, noticing her agitation, pointed out its location.

Because the seeker is the sought this subversive verse is pointing out that the search itself is a big joke.

*"The Self seems conditioned
because of ignorance. The ego-centric misconception
is destroyed when the ego realizes*

oneness with the Self."

(44)

Ego is commonly viewed as an implacable inner enemy, an ugly and intractable foe. Actually egoism, a misunderstanding about who we are, not ego, is the problem. An ego is just embodied Consciousness, like a tree, a microbe, a whale.

The day we pop out of the womb conditioning casts its restrictive cover over the uncoverable Self. Myriad do's and don'ts, should's and shouldn'ts, likes and dislikes, habits and tendencies obscure the self-evident Self. By the time we understand we've been spiritually duped by mom and pop, the government, and society in general, it's usually too late to change. The image of Gulliver, a powerful giant rendered impotent by thousands of little people, is a beautiful metaphor of the Infinite in oneself made prisoner by thousands of insignificant thoughts, feelings, illusions, and misconceptions.

On the objective level everything we do is the result of conditioning - the way we think, talk, eat, sleep, walk, etc. Our conditioning hurts because in our innermost being we know what it is to be spontaneous and free. Feelings of duty, obligation, responsibility, attachment, boredom, anger, frustration, hostility, aggression, alienation, etc., indicate powerful programming and may motivate us to seek escapes through alcohol, drugs, work, entertainment, etc.; but we quickly become prisoners of the escapes.

The only way out, as these commentaries suggest, is through the discovery that the ego and the Self are one.

To make sense of this challenge to conventional wisdom we need only see that the ego is simply the Self under an apparent delusion. Those who insist on eliminating the ego presuppose that it is a real entity. According to Vedanta only the Self exists. Any perception of a separate being is ignorance or egoism. And ignorance can be removed. If the ego were real it could not be dismissed. And if it were real there would be two realities, the ego and the Self. This is not possible because reality is by definition non-dual.

***"The ignorance "i" and "mine"
are removed by Self-Knowledge,
just as right information removes
wrong knowledge about directions."***

(45)

Listen carefully to the next conversation with yourself or others and notice how it's explicitly or implicitly centered on the supposition that you and the one with whom you are conversing is a limited "i."

Assuming I'm an "i," certain things automatically become "mine." Since they're "mine" I become responsible for them and am forced to suffer the consequences flowing from my attachment to them, an attachment that so consumes the mind there is no time to look into the real nature of the "I." If your sense of responsibility is wearing you out, a redefinition may be in order.

The science of the Self doesn't advocate the wholesale renunciation of responsibility except for those with the appropriate temperament; however it recommends taking a long hard look at this insidious conditioning. Making the search for Truth one's primary responsibility automatically reduces non-essential responsibilities. And letting go of those that support Ego's insecure and guilty psychology should be as important as sticking with those that lead to liberation.

Contemplation on the inherent emptiness of the "i" might profitably accompany a program of responsibility divestiture. If the Self creates all things and beings and dwells within them as their innermost essence, isn't It responsible for everything? In a way it's an insult for the "i" to take responsibility for things and beings because it implies that the "I," is incapable of looking after It's own. Serving, loving, and helping others based on an appreciation of innate oneness of all things is the healthy view while relating to others as "mine" brings only weariness. A wise man said, "Bitten by the vipers of guilt and responsibility, humans suffer endless miseries in the ocean of illusion."

Creative endeavors involve two factors: raw material and the intelligence to shape it, neither of which is ultimately authored by human beings. Our intelligence is merely a reflection of the Pure Intelligence that creates and sustains the whole cosmos. All sentient beings are rooted in this Awareness. Belonging to anyone, they belong to That. Not only does everything belong to the Self, it is the Self in so many forms. If you really want to be an I and possess something, wake up and discover that within the scope of your all-pervading multi-dimensional awareness everything is already yours - because it is you.

***"The enlightened see through
the eye of wisdom and***

perceive the whole universe in the Self.

(46)

One view has the eye of wisdom or "third eye" as a still, mystically powerful, reflective mind, one capable of transcendental insight. Because the flow of thought has subsided, the mind, at meditation, merges into its source, loses its separate identity, and sees oneness everywhere.

Another, not-incompatible, view contends that the "third eye" is just a symbol of the Self. We have two for seeing objects and one, the Self, for seeing reality.

Enlightenment is a subtle shift from ego's point of view to the Self's. The ego, identified with the body, sees the universe "outside." I am here, everything is there. However, the Self is all pervasive so nothing exists beyond it and everything appears within It, like an image in a mirror.

"Whole universe" does not mean that the enlightened see the whole physical cosmos but that they are aware of themselves as the Awareness in which all ego's perceptions are bathed.

"The Self alone exists.

The physical universe is the Self.

*As pots made of clay are nothing but clay,
everything is the Self to the enlightened."*

(47)

Enlightenment is a shift in vision, not in conditioning. One's awareness of a city is quite different viewed from street level than from an airplane high above. Most of us are situated at the street level, existentially speaking, our knowledge conditioned by experience as ego-centric individuals scurrying through the mind's labyrinthine streets. An awakened soul, however, situated in the spiritual sky high above the city of the mind, functions from knowledge based on non-dual "experience."¹⁰⁹

The shape, not the clay, makes a clay pot a pot; yet if the pot breaks the clay remains. Life is essentially formless Awareness whose solid and specific appearance is projected by the ignorance of the Self. Self knowledge breaks the conditioning that causes us to think of ourselves and our worlds as separate and limited forms.

¹⁰⁹ "Non-dual experience" means that although the subject and object exist they are known to be essentially the same.

This, the last, and the next five verses describe a liberated person.¹¹⁰ Christianity's naive version of liberation, salvation, maintains that the soul is contaminated with "original sin," a disease for which there is no cure in this life. However, with lots of virtuous hard work and a little luck God in His infinite mercy might send the hapless sinner on to heaven once the mortal coil's been shuffled off. Vedanta, on the other hand, suggests that the only "sin," one erasable at any time, is not knowing the innermost Self. When we die to the ego's false idea of a limited, conditioned, and separate existence we come to live eternally in "heavenly" inner freedom. The Self-Realized person has all the marks of an ordinary conditioned "sinner"- walking the dog, raising a family, watching the tube, driving to work - distinguished only by a hidden vision that neutralizes conditioning and bestows lasting fulfillment. The liberated are in but not of the world. Careful discrimination is needed to separate them from us.

***The liberated Self knowers
purify the traits of the lower self.
(48)***

Attachment to Subtle Body phenomena must be renounced before the pure and powerful knowledge "I am actionless Awareness" takes root in the mind. Since attachment, not the thoughts themselves, is the problem the mind may remain relatively impure even after enlightenment. The verse enjoins the liberated to continue cleaning the vehicle through which the Self works. The mind will never be completely clean because it is an amalgam of disparate energies. However, even though the liberated are no longer affected by the mind, it does affect other minds, since it is the vehicle through which the Self expresses. If the enlightened are to communicate effectively and if others are to get uncompromising experience and accurate knowledge of the Self the enlightened need to make sure their minds are reasonably pure.

Do the enlightened cease to have personalities? Self-Realization combined with a vigorous *sadhana* effortlessly purifies personality dross leaving a shining spacious mind capable of accommodating and expressing the flow of spiritual impulses now flooding in from the Self, impulses (formerly ignored or repressed) which become the basis of a "new"

¹¹⁰ "Liberated person" or "enlightened being" is actually a contradiction in terms since a person is by definition limited and liberation is unlimited freedom. Still, from a conventional point of view, enlightenment seems to be something possessed by certain persons even though it is the nature of the Self. So to make it easier to understand the text refers to "the enlightened" as if they were individuals.

personality. Formerly rigid and habitual, it becomes soft, sweet, flexible, and relaxed. The intellect subtilizes and develops the capacity to see deeply into things, the heart, merged with the universal Heart, pours out pure love, and the body becomes a energetic channel for effecting the Divine Will through works.

*After killing the like-dislike monster in the ocean of delusion
the united dwell in unconditioned peace.*

(49)

Until the like-dislike monster is destroyed by spiritual practice the mind will never develop the equanimity required to seriously inquire into the nature of the Self. And the destruction of one's likes and dislikes depends on removing the delusory belief that getting what one wants and avoiding what one doesn't will bring lasting happiness.

The practice enjoined by scripture for gradual purification of likes and dislikes is an attitude of non-attachment to the results of one's actions.¹¹¹ Attachment to the results of action reinforces the likes and dislikes motivating the actions and keeps one tied to the karmic wheel. This vicious cycle of action and desire is referred to as "samsara," the ocean of delusion.¹¹²

*"Indifferent to object happiness, the liberated
are satisfied with the Bliss of the Self,
which shines like a candle in an earthen jar."*

(50)

The renunciation of objects is not equivalent to Self-Realization. Because they aren't real we can't renounce them. Because they are devoid of Self nature one can't possess them. **Bondage is clinging to the idea that the presence or absence of any object can fundamentally affect who we are.** What pull will objects exert if I know that happiness is my nature?

Though it is always shining within, in the normal extroverted state of mind the bliss of the Self is unknown, except as it sporadically flickers in moments of object happiness.

¹¹¹ See "Meditation in Action" page 63.

¹¹² The literal meaning is "circling." The "circle" referred to is the sense of alienation, frustration, and boredom produced by the repetitious conditioning of the *vasanas*. When one wants something, like sex or money, one chases it. When one gets it one's wants are renewed, so one chases it again. And again. And again.

Imagine Consciousness arranged in layers from the subtle to the gross. The subtlest inner core pervades the succeeding layers but none pervade it. At the moment of Self-Realization, Consciousness, having removed itself from the outer layers, no longer illumines them, but illumines itself, "within," a phenomenon likened to a candle shining inside an earthen jar. In this inward shining state one comes to know the Self unconditioned by objective associations.

***"Though apparently conditioned by their bodies,
the enlightened are unconcerned
and move through life completely
unattached - like the breeze."***

(51)

Fools imagine that the enlightened walk on water, levitate at will, appear simultaneously in several places, manifest precious gems out of nothing, sleep underground for weeks, project multi-color auras, bestow enlightenment with a glance, are omniscient, etc. Wonderful and inexplicable things often happen in the presence of awakened souls, but making something of it is pure ignorance. Enlightenment is the removal of a simple error in perception, miraculous only for its ironic simplicity.

The enlightened pick their noses, wear polyester pants, and quarrel with their spouses. Once awakened, one doesn't suddenly sprout a new body, the mind doesn't immediately empty for good, nor is the Causal Body immediately purged of all *samskaras*. "Before enlightenment chopping wood and carrying water. After enlightenment chopping wood and carrying water."

Enlightenment transforms the personality naturally and gently. Because the body and mind belong to material reality and cannot be micro-managed the "united one," ever indifferent, allows evolution to do the work, changing, yet never compelled to change.¹¹³

Nor does one bother to exploit enlightenment's many gifts. To those striving for it, enlightenment seems the equivalent of winning the spiritual lottery. The awakened, on the other hand, see it as the ho-hum state and view the *samsaric* state as extraordinary. To call attention to a previous stay in the madness by notifying the world of one's change of state would be the height of silliness. So they pass through life like the breeze - free and unconcerned.

¹¹³ As the Self the enlightened never change but their egos, being under the power of the *vasanas*, purify effortlessly.

An actress plays her role so convincingly the audience believes her to be the character she is portraying, though no confusion concerning her identity exists in her own mind. Outwardly appearing to suffer the joys and sorrows of the unenlightened, inwardly the awakened one is only pure, perfect, blissful Awareness.

***"When conditionings dissolve, the Enlightened
are absorbed into the all-pervading Reality
like water into water and light into light."***

(52)

Self-absorption is accomplished by destroying ignorance, the cloud of unknowing that covers the ego and prevents it from realizing its nature as Awareness. Why are the ego and the Self one? The Self is formless Awareness and the ego Awareness in a form. Awareness in a form is Awareness, in the way a wave is the ocean. Appearing to have a separate existence, the ego just happens to be a seventy year wave in the eternal ocean of Awareness.

Does the Self's awareness of the total worlds entitle It to more bliss and knowledge than an ego who is only aware of it's individual world? Is the macrocosmic awareness¹¹⁴ a higher or better state, one worth striving for? One needn't drink the seven seas to experience salt water. A simple drop will do.

***"Realize that to be the Self the attainment of which
leaves nothing to be attained, the blessedness of which
leaves no blessings to be desired, the knowledge of which
leaves nothing more to be known."***

Realize that to be the Self which when seen

¹¹⁴ Vedanta terms the macrocosmic awareness *Ishwara* or God. *Ishwara* is Self apparently conditioned by It's association with the total. Associated with an individual the Self is called *jiva*, an embodied being. In reality there is no difference between the total and the individual because they are just concepts created by a mind in ignorance of the Self. This concept is only understood by experience of oneself as the Self. Intellectually we assume that to be aware of everything one's awareness would have to be bigger or better than to be aware of one thing. But the Self is not big or little. "Larger than the largest, smaller than the smallest" says the Upanishad. To know everything is not superior to knowing one thing because the essence of knowing, *chit*, is never modified by what it knows. Total bliss is not better than individual bliss because bliss is unaffected by the body or bodies it enlivens. And "total" is just a concept applying to a lot of individuals not a big individual, just as "individual" is just a concept based on the mistaken belief that one is one's body.

*nothing more is to be seen, and which having become,
one is not born again in this world.*

*Realize that to be the Self which is absolute
being-awareness-bliss, non-dual, limitless and eternal,
filling all time and space.*

*Realize that to be the indivisible and blissful Self,
which is identified as the Immutable
Substrate by the Science of Self-Knowledge."
(53-56)*

We desire to attain things because we feel that their possession and enjoyment will make us happier than we are presently. But if we're as happy as we can be what's to get?

"Which having become, one is not born again into this world..." Exoterically the idea refers to reincarnation, rebirth by Desire. Dying with unfulfilled desires, according to the Vedanta, brings you back; it's only fair the universe supply another opportunity for happiness. If you're already happy, why reincarnate?

Esoterically "world" means "state of mind." Because the enlightened are wholly satisfied and no longer operate from the belief that happiness is in objects their state of mind never changes.¹¹⁵

Since the quest for relative knowledge is only a misinformed quest for Self knowledge when Self knowledge dawns the belief that knowledge will make one happy dies.

Experience takes place in the mind, not in the world, as a continuous series of events. These events, like a movie, are projected on the screen of Consciousness, the "immutable substrate." Because we're so fascinated by the drama of our lives we don't see the screen on which it is unfolding.

*"The bliss experienced by all creatures
at all places and times, past, present, and future is a
flyspeck compared to a trillionth part of the
Bliss of the Self."
(57)*

¹¹⁵ The thoughts and feelings in the mind change but the mind itself doesn't change.

This verse is not to be taken as a factual statement about bliss but as an attempt by the author (who was also a poet) to provide a positive motivation for seeking the Self. As mentioned in footnote one hundred above, bliss is bliss, neither great or small. However it may seem greater or lesser with reference to time, determined by the intervals between blissful episodes. In an ordinary person bliss may, contrary to the statement in this verse, seem more intense the more infrequently it is experienced, in so far as the interval between episodes is non-blissful or miserable.

Enlightenment is the continual experience of the Self - which is the nature of bliss. And to someone who experiences bliss all the time bliss effectively stops being obviously blissful and becomes a continual natural feeling of wholeness.

The argument that continuous bliss is inferior to the intense blisses and the miseries of *samsaric* life, which is seen by its apologists as more interesting and exciting than enlightenment, is contradicted by the fact that when worldly people¹¹⁶ experience the miseries that define *samsaric* happiness they immediately strive to be rid of them. One would suppose that belief in this argument might lead a person to court intense miseries in so far as the bliss of their absence might be ever more blissful. Or that the joy of attaining the objects of one's desire might be experienced as transcendental ecstasy in contrast to previous sorrow.

***"The Self pervades all objects.
Action is impossible without the Self.
The Self permeates everything
as butter permeates milk."
(58)***

Just as butter lies unseen and unmanifest in milk, so the Self is hidden in all things and beings. To bring it out, churn the inner self with meditative discrimination.

***"Realize that to be the Self which is neither
subtle nor gross, short nor long.
Realize that to be the Self which is changeless,
qualityless, colorless nameless and formless."
(59)***

¹¹⁶ *Samsaris* or people who believe happiness is in objects and activities.

The word, it is said, "killeth." How can the Self be captured in words? Yet when we begin to inquire, words, like those contained in the meditation verse above, are very useful. Recently at a flea market, a man sold an uncut sapphire for ten dollars that netted his customer, a professional rock hound, two million. Knowing what it was, is it likely the vendor would have parted with it for that price? Like the rock, the buyer's knowledge was a great treasure. An idea of what we're searching for not only increases the chances of finding it, but of properly appreciating it once found.

***"Realize That to be the Self
which illumines the sun,
but is not illumined by the sun."
(60)***

Physical light is limited because it depends on a source of energy other than itself to create and sustain it. It is unable to illumine darkness because it dispels it. It doesn't know itself.

Consciousness, on the other hand, spontaneously and eternally generates Light from its own being. Pervading everything, it is that by virtue of which both light and darkness, physical and psychological, are known. And It knows itself.

***"As fire permeates an iron ball
the fire of Consciousness
pervades the whole universe."
(61)***

The author must have been passing in front of a blacksmith's hut when this eloquent verse came to him. He saw an iron ball, a symbol of inert and insentient matter, come alive as it absorbed the smithy's fire. Consciousness is the vital life in every atom of the material world. Without the blessing of this mystic fire the dance of life does not occur. Its simple being provides the spark necessary to kindle life in these inert material coverings.

***"The Self is other than this, the universe.
If anything other than the Self exists,
it is unreal like a mirage."
(62)***

***“All that is perceived or heard is the Self.
Knowing the Self one sees everything as Reality,
non-dual Being, absolute Bliss, pure Awareness.”***

(63)

In a dream every object is the mind of the dreamer. If I dream a wolf is attacking me, I am the wolf and I am the "me" under attack. I am the dream buildings, the trees, people, my fears and desires - absolutely everything.

In a similar manner, we take the waking state to be real, suffering and enjoying accordingly. When I wake up to the Self, I discover that the waking state is a dream, suffering and enjoyment stop, overwhelming Bliss floods my being, and I find myself free of limitation.

***"The Self, omnipresent Consciousness,
is seen through the eye of wisdom.¹¹⁷
One whose vision is enshrouded by darkness
sees It not as the blind miss the sun."***

(64)

The attention factor in the unevolved flows exclusively into outer objects. (*fig.5*) Imagine a triangle. Place each of the three conscious centers¹¹⁸ of the inner being (mind, intellect, and ego) at one of the three corners. See each "looking away" from the center as it relates to objects in its field. Because each center is preoccupied with the happenings on its own turf, it has little awareness of happenings in the others (a major cause of inner-conflict or stress) and no awareness of the Self hidden in the center. So the person is spiritually blind, or in the language of this verse, a closed "third eye."

¹¹⁷ See verse 46 page 84. for an additional explanation.

¹¹⁸ In actuality there is only one conscious "center", the Self. In the unevolved, however, the Self is apparently divided into three. The techniques of spirituality are designed to heal this inner split by focusing attention on a symbol or practice or, better yet, the Self.

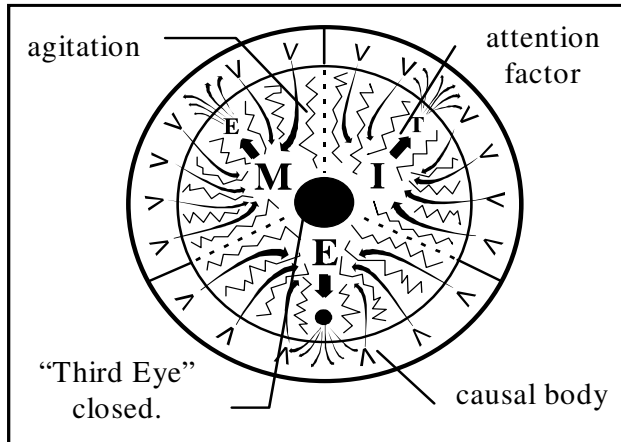


fig. 5

The evolved soul’s attention looks into the heart¹¹⁹ of the Subtle Body triangle where it perceives the Self. (fig.6) This fusing of the attention factors¹²⁰ of the three inner centers creates a lazer-like ray of meditative attention that is often called the "eye of wisdom" or the "third eye." Oddly enough, this inward seeing, precise as it is, does not prevent simultaneous perception of the outer objects.

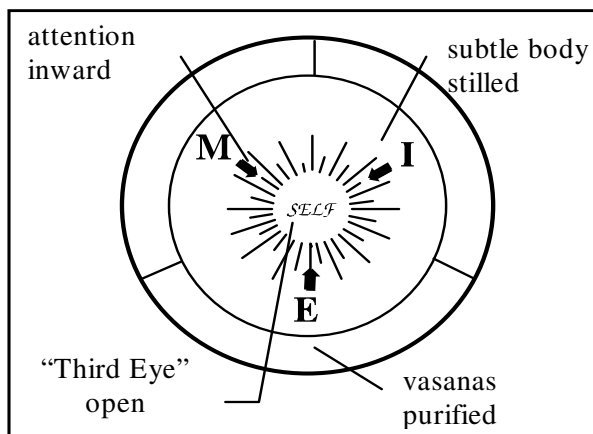


fig.6

¹¹⁹ Where the three centers intersect or overlap, the source of their consciousness.

¹²⁰ Often called *yoga*. *Yoga* means to join or yoke.

The "opening" of the inner eye can be consciously effected through the culture of the Subtle Body known as purification of mind or *sadhana*,¹²¹ which redirects the attention factor by removal of waves in the mind-substance.¹²² Practice of *sadhana* coincides with the evolution of the inner vision through many lives.

***“The soul purified in the fire
kindled by hearing
shines like gold.”***

(65)

The fire of knowledge kindled by hearing the truth causes the fiery light of Consciousness to blaze in the mind and purify it until it "shines like gold."

***"The sun of Self knowledge,
rises in the sky of the Heart
and destroys the darkness of ignorance.
Pervading and sustaining all,
its shining makes everything shine."***

(66)

***"The one freed of temporal
limitations through worship of the Self becomes
the all-pervading all-knowing blissful Self
and attains Immortality."***

(67)

¹²¹ Sanskrit for "means of attainment."

¹²² *Chitta*

OM TAT SAT